

the chronicle

Festive pupils

Christmas cards design winners are handed prizes

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Fundraise fun

School pupils make a date to give a hand to hospital

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Easy street

DK win comfortable victory despite injuries

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Notorious murderer Neilson dies at 75

BLACK Panther serial killer Donald Neilson, who kidnapped and murdered Midland heiress Lesley Whittle, has died in hospital.

The 75-year-old was handed four life sentences in 1976 and was one of a small group of notorious criminals who were told they would spend the rest of their lives behind bars.

He was taken to hospital from Norwich prison with breathing difficulties early on Saturday and was pronounced dead on Sunday.

Neilson was a jobbing builder who kidnapped his victim, 17-year-old Lesley, from her bed at home in Highley, near Bridgnorth, on January 14, 1975.

He had learned she had inherited £82,500 from her father George, who ran Kidderminster-based Whittle's coach company.

Neilson took Wulfrun College student Lesley to a disused drainage shaft at the Bath Pool beauty spot, in Kidsgrove, north Staffordshire.

He demanded £50,000 in a ransom note left in the Whittle family's lounge, ordering her older brother Ronald to take the money to a telephone box at the Swan shopping centre, Kidderminster.

Her body was found two months later.

In 2008, the High Court ruled Neilson must never be released from jail.

Criminals are let out early

HUNDREDS of prisoners are being released from West Midlands jails every year without serving even half their sentences, new figures claim. Robbers, burglars and drug dealers have been allowed back on to the streets.

Figures from the Ministry of Justice show that just over 3,000 criminals were jailed in the West Midlands between January and June. Of those, more than 770 were released under the Government's Home Detention Curfew scheme.

PUSH TO REMOVE EMBARRASSMENT

A CAMPAIGN to get a derelict office block on one of Dudley's busiest routes demolished will be taken to council chiefs in the new year.

More than 800 signatures have been collected calling for Cavendish House to be knocked down, claiming it is an "embarrassment" to the town as it embarks on a £10 million regeneration plan.

And now organiser Jim Brookes is planning to hand the petition in to Dudley Council in the hope it will spark a debate among councillors.

He hopes to get 1,000 by the start of January and says he will "not give up" until the notorious building has gone.

The building, which stands on a bank above Dudley Southern Bypass, has stood empty for five years and there were hopes that it would be turned into a local hotel.

But talks between interested chains and owners Abstract stalled, leaving the prospect of the site remaining unused for years to come.

The council says the building is still part of their plans for the town's regeneration, but residents have now signed a petition calling on the council and owners to tear down the run-down building.

Many of the windows are boarded up or broken and it has become a target for vandals.

It comes after the Friends of Dudley Town raised concerns that parts are putting off potential investors, branding them "absolute eyesores".

Mr Brookes, aged 45, of Watson's Green Road, said: "I've been surprised at how many people I've met who

by
Adam Burling

have agreed with me. "It would be a shame to lose a potential regeneration site but that would be far outweighed by getting rid of a building that has become a complete embarrassment to the town."

"Dudley has come in for some stick lately, especially about the number of empty shops, and Cavendish House does it no favours whatsoever."

Councillor Angus Adams, cabinet member for regeneration, said: "Cavendish House is still part of our plans for the town's regeneration but there is no update at the moment."

Discussions

"We are involved in ongoing discussions with the owners about its future."

The council has said it would prefer the building to be used as a hotel or office block, and has outlined this in Dudley Town Centre Area Development plans for the town's regeneration.

Each wing in the L-shaped building would have been converted into a 60 or 90-bedroom hotel under the plans.

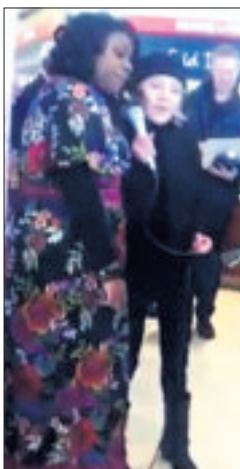
The remainder of the space would be used for refurbished office space, or a 150-bedroom hotel could be developed within the whole building.

Cavendish House has stood empty since a security firm moved out. It is thought it costs around £250,000 a year for upkeep.

Not strictly a planned performance



Robbie Savage joined the crowds to watch the show



YouTube footage of Vie and Lulu



Singer Vie Watson, from Sedgley



Winner Harry Judd

IT WAS supposed to be a low-key carol concert to bring a festive feel to a service station during the countdown to Christmas.

Then a swathe of stars strolled through the doors of the station and pint-sized performer Lulu took the mic alongside part-time Dudley music teacher Vie Watson.

The audience became a "sea of smartphones" with people clamouring for a glimpse of the impromptu duet - as Strictly Come Dancing heart-throb Harry Judd and fellow contestants Robbie Savage, Audley Harrison, Russell Grant and Edwina Currie joined the crowds.

The celebrities had been making their way up the M6 Toll to Blackpool for the weekend's Strictly finale when they decided to take a short break at the Roadchef services, Norton Canes.

Mother-of-two Mrs Watson, from Sedgley, said Lulu asked her permission to share centre stage to sing Silent Night. The star then told fans: "She's such a good singer, I couldn't resist."

Atmosphere

The 42-year-old had been asked to appear at the services by husband and site director Peter. "He wanted to make sure there was a lovely Christmas atmosphere," Mrs Watson, of Wolverhampton Road, said.

"I saw the group in the distance and recognised them. I wondered what they were doing here but I had a job to do and I carried on singing."

"They left but then returned en masse minutes later. They were all smiling and little Lulu came out of the crowd and asked if she would be able to sing Silent Night with me - I told her I was honoured to have been asked." Videos of the performance have become a YouTube hit and Mrs Watson, who sings in the choir at Calvary Church in Kingswinford, hopes it will heighten her profile. Mrs Watson provides part-time music tuition at schools across the Black Country as part of her work.

Review on closure of home in new year

A PUBLIC consultation reviewing proposals to close a Kingswinford care home will get under way in the new year.

New Bradley Hall, Compton Drive, has been earmarked for closure as part of a shake-up of adult social care services in Dudley borough.

Thousands of people have signed up to protest against the closure saying residents, many aged in their 90s, will be at risk if they are moved.

But the council recently agreed the closure plans should be looked at again.

Dudley Council adult social care chief, Councillor David Vickers, said a "comprehensive" consultation would be held - rubbishing claims it was a formality and a "box-ticking exercise".

"We are writing to all residents this week to inform them we are putting together a comprehensive consultation programme that we will share with them at the end of January," he said.

Campaign leader Mac Scott MBE, whose 94-year-old mother-in-law Irene Claridge lives at New Bradley Hall, has been asking protesters to get back in touch with the council and give them their views on the closure plans.

● Picture - See Page 7

Man jailed on road crimes

A CRIMINAL, who sped through a string of red lights at up to 60mph while chased by police through the Black Country, has been jailed for two-and-a-half years.

Alan Brookes was spotted in Tipton Road, Dudley, on October 2. The 42-year-old banned motorist careered through five sets of red lights at around 60mph.

Brookes, from Tunnel Street, West Bromwich, pleaded guilty to a string of offences and was jailed.

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College creation reaches milestone

THE CREATION of an £18 million new college development in Dudley has reached a major milestone with construction of its steel frame now complete.

Work started on the vocational centre, being built on the site of a former fire station in Tower Street, in February and it is expected to open to students next September.

The building, which will be known as Dudley Evolve, forms

part of a £30m university-style campus scheme by Dudley College to create a new learning quarter in the town centre.

It will house modern learning facilities for business, information technology and travel and tourism students. Now bosses have held a topping out ceremony at the site to mark the completion of the final bolt being put in the steel structure at its highest point, which was attended

by a number of students. A college spokesman said that the elements of the building are now also taking shape, including the sports hall, large enough for six badminton courts, the theatre, which seats 180 people, and the hair and beauty salon which will be open to the public.

Also progressing is the large fitness suite, which is being built behind the old fire station facade,

two dance studios and a music area that houses a recording studio.

Dudley College principal Lowell Williams said: "Now we've reached the topping out stage you can see how the development is really taking shape."

"Every time I visit the site I see how it's transforming from a steel structure into the fantastic vocational training centre we've imagined and planned."

Inventor Robert trains his eye on Jubilee show

An eccentric inventor from the Black Country is hoping to play a part in the Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebrations in London next year with – a replica of a famous train.

Robert Merlyn Farwell has created a scaled-down version of the Stourbridge Lion, which was the first locomotive to run in America.

The original was built at the town's Foster and Rastick works back in 1828 and the engine earned its name from the picture of a lion's face that was painted on the front.

Mr Farwell, aged 65, spent three weeks making his replica, which also contains a glass-making furnace that he has uses for displays at local events.

He has now applied to take part in a parade of more than 1,000 boats which will form a flotilla on the Thames for the jubilee on June 3.

Mr Farwell, who toils away in his self-built workshop in Parkfield Road, Stourbridge, wants to take the Lion on a boat and hold glass-blowing demonstrations.

He said: "It would be a great way to promote the skills and industry of this region and it would increase the profile of the Stourbridge Lion, which a lot of people are unaware of."

"Getting a boat shouldn't be a problem, so I'm just hoping I get permission from the authorities," added Mr Farwell.

Mr Farwell is also planning a full-size replica of the train, which he wants to display at the end of the track in Stourbridge Town station.

He intends to erect it behind the buffer between the platforms.

Mr Farwell, a father-of-five, spends hours each day in his workshop, which he calls "Camelot Castle" – spelled that way as a nod to the difficulty he has with spelling.

Appearances

The inventor has had a varied career and some of the roles he has taken on include appearances as an extra in TV shows such as Boon in the 1980s.

Mr Farwell also set up a business called Wizard Merlyn's Costume Hire in Church Street, Stourbridge, in the same decade.

His talents also extend to magic, and he spent summer seasons in Clacton in the 1970s as a children's entertainer.

Move on marriages

THE MP for Dudley South has welcomed the launch of a Government consultation on the criminalisation of forced marriage.

It follows an announcement earlier this year by the Prime Minister that the Government would criminalise the breach of forced marriage prevention orders which block forced marriages from going ahead and protect potential victims.

MP Chris Kelly said: "I am glad this Government is examining how we can criminalise forced marriage while ensuring we do not discourage victims from coming forward. We need to completely eradicate this unacceptable crime."

Sisters enjoying a n-ice time



Sisters on skates – Bunny Hunt, aged 58, left, and Hylary Trayer, who is 68

RETIRED sisters have been showing youngsters a thing or two about skating after taking part in regular sessions on the ice at a garden centre in the Black Country.

Hylary Trayer, aged 68, and Anne "Bunny" Hunt, 58, have been showing off their skills at the rink which has opened for the festive season at Webbs in Hagley.

The pair, who live in Selly Oak in Birmingham, usually have ice dance lessons

every week at the ice rink in Birmingham but love the opportunity to skate outside. Hylary, who worked as a research biochemist at Birmingham University, said, "It's wonderful to skate outside, especially at Christmas time."

"It's lovely as it goes dark and the lights come on and last year on a couple of occasions it even started snowing. It even made an old lady like me feel Christmassy."

thechronicle

Library services building share bid

A LIBRARY in Wyre Forest would share its building with other services and two others would be relocated, under cost-cutting plans.

Worcestershire County Council has launched a review of its library services in a bid to save £1.8 million.

The authority is trying to make savings of £70 million by 2015.

Council bosses have now announced proposals to move other services into the Kidderminster Library building, in Market Street, to share space with the facility.

They said the move would reduce operating costs.

Plans have also emerged to relocate the existing Stourport Library, based in Worcester Street, into the town's Civic Centre and also to relocate Bewdley Library.

Members of Bewdley Town Council, the parish council and Wyre Forest District Council would be asked to identify a location the library can share with other public services. The plans were due to be discussed by Worcestershire County Council's cabinet at a meeting tonight. If they are approved the plans would go out for public consultation.

Looking for new umpires

BUDDING cricket umpires can learn new skills at a free training session at Himley Cricket Club.

North Worcestershire Cricket Development Group has organised the night at the club next Wednesday.

The cricket club's ground is in Wolverhampton Road, Himley, near Dudley.

Worcestershire umpires' training officer Tim Granger will be taking the session, which is aimed at players aged 16-18 and anyone else who may be asked to umpire in second and third team cricket. For further details call 07530 511245.

Thieves take gates

THIEVES are targeting metal gates across Wyre Forest. West Mercia Police say a pair of 12ft galvanised steel gates worth £1,000 were taken from a field in Drayton, near Kidderminster. Another gate was taken from a field in the same village. Contact police on 0300 333 3000.

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NEWS
in briefJewellery stolen
in raid on home

JEWELLERY and a camera have been stolen in a burglary in Kidderminster. The thieves broke into a property in Brookside Way, Blakedown and took a gold wedding ring worth £200, a ladies gold watch worth £120 and a Fuji F650 digital camera worth £100. The theft happened between 4.15 and 6pm on December 9.

Pc Adrian Bartlett said: "Anyone offered items for sale similar to those stolen are urged to call us." People can contact Pc Bartlett on 0300 333 3000.

Academy taking
The Risk at launch

X FACTOR stars The Risk brought out the crowds to celebrate the launch of a new multi-million pound college academy in Kidderminster.

The £6.1 million centre has been created in the listed Piano Building in a former Brintons carpet warehouse in the town centre. Hundreds of fans watched the boyband perform in front of the academy. The group were voted off the show last month and member Charlie Healy, 25, said they had been working non-stop.

Planning to build
homes near firm

ALMOST 100 new homes could be built on land near a landmark ceramics factory in Stourport.

Redrow Homes Midlands has lodged proposals for a mixture of two to five bedroom houses on the site by Morgan Technical Ceramics, Bewdley Road.

Some of the industrial units belonging to the factory will be demolished to make way, said Wye Forest District Council.

Woman rescued
from house fire

A MOTHER had to be rescued by firefighters after a chip pan caught fire.

A 10-year-old boy attempted to put the blaze out in North View Drive, Harts Hill, Brierley Hill.

He alerted neighbours when he failed. One cat and three dogs were also rescued from the property by crews who were at the scene for around an hour.

Safety advice

RESIDENTS can pick up advice on staying safe over Christmas and New Year from Dudley Council's home safety service. The service is asking residents to be more fire aware.

Guilty of
cruelty to
marmoset

A COUPLE who sold a sick pet monkey, which had been left "crippled" with fractured bones because of a poor diet, have been found guilty of animal cruelty.

Lee Powell and Julie Jones failed to ensure the four-month-old marmoset, named Mikey, was fed an appropriate diet, Dudley Magistrates Court heard.

The monkey, which was distressed and in pain, had a bone disease caused by a lack of vitamin D3 and calcium and had to be put down by the RSPCA.

Magistrates said the scientific evidence against Powell, aged 50, and Jones, 42, both of Sunderland Drive, Stourbridge, was indisputable.

They were each found guilty of two charges of causing unnecessary suffering to the marmoset and two of not taking reasonable steps to ensure the animal was fed appropriately or protected from pain, injury or suffering.

They were bailed for sentence on January 12.

During the two-day both Powell and Jones maintained they did not know there was anything wrong with the monkey and said they would have taken it to the vets if they had known there was.

Club attack
man sought

POLICE are trying to track down a man after a reveller was attacked in a Midland nightclub.

The 21-year-old victim was on the dance floor at Love 2 Love in Bromsgrove when he was involved in an altercation with other men. One of the group hit him.

He sustained multiple injuries to his mouth and teeth during the attack early on November 19.

Police would like to trace a man who is white, with short dark hair and was wearing a light-coloured polo. Call PC Mark Greaves on 0300 3333000.

Store is to close

A BUDGET electrical store at Merry Hill Shopping Centre will close next month. Best Buy, which sells products from electric plugs to laptops, will cease trading on January 15 as retailer Carphone Warehouse, which owns the firm, shuts its 11 branches across the country. The Dudley Store store employs around 100.

Councils must tackle problem families – PM

COUNCILS in the West Midlands have been given two months to identify thousands of problem families as part of a £448m project to tackle neighbours from hell.

Prime Minister David Cameron was in Oldbury last week where he launched a national network of "trouble-shooters" which will aim to tackle hardcore problem families.

He revealed that there were 1,000 such families in Sandwell living on benefits and costing the taxpayer more than £75,000 a year each.

The scheme will see individuals responsible for each family and overseeing their

responsibilities. They will go into homes in the morning, making sure children are going to school, parents are able to work and insuring drug and alcohol addicts get treatment.

Unhelpful

He said the funding would lead to greater savings by tackling the estimated £9bn a year that troubled families cost the entire nation.

Speaking at the Sandwell Christian Centre Mr Cameron said: "Families see the system as faceless, intrusive and unhelpful.

"We can only act if we know where trou-

bled families live. The Prime Minister went on to say: "By February we want local authorities to identify who troubled families are, where they live and the services they use."

"The next step is to get in there to help," added Mr Cameron.

Mr Cameron said, however, that councils would have to fund 60 percent of the costs themselves.

It comes despite most local councils coming under pressure to make huge savings as national government funding is cut.

But the Prime Minister said he was determined to "get to grips" with the problems

that families face and that the project would "make a real difference in homes and neighbourhoods across the city". Mr Cameron added: "We're not prescribing a single response. But we are demanding results from councils in return for support."

Contact

For many of the most troubled families, there will be a family worker – a single point of contact for the first time for particular families. Dudley South Conservative MP Chris Kelly was in the audience and said: "I am very much looking forward to seeing this begin in Dudley."

Paratrooper who shook his
son to death is sent to jail

A PARATROOPER who momentarily lost control and violently shook his baby son causing him severe brain injuries has started a five-year jail term for manslaughter.

Jonathan James, aged 25, was found guilty of unlawfully killing five-month-old Theo Davies at a flat in the Midlands. The jury took nearly eight hours to reach their verdict.

It came after a four-week trial at Worcester Crown Court. James' family gasped as the verdict was delivered in court.

The hearing had to be momentarily suspended after a man hurled abuse at the judge and jury. Mr Justice Butterfield ordered the public gallery be cleared after the outburst.

James, of MoD St Athan, Barry, in the Vale of Glamorgan, hung his head and showed no emotion as the sentence was passed.

Mr Justice Butterfield said there was much evidence to suggest James had been a caring father but something had "simply snapped" on that day.

Little Theo had been left in the care of his father at a flat in Old Ford Walk, Stourport, while his mother, Leanne Davies, popped out to buy milk on August 24, 2009.

When she returned minutes later she saw Theo

lying lifeless on the bed and a panicking James calling the emergency services.

The baby was rushed first to Worcester Royal Hospital and then to Birmingham Children's Hospital where he died the following day.

Post mortems revealed he had suffered severe bleeding in and around the brain which they concluded had been caused by a trauma.

James claimed he had found his son having a fit and said he could not remember what happened next. Mr Christopher Holton QC, defending, said: "It was a single incident stemming from a momentary loss of self-control."

Mr Justice Butterfield told James: "Little Theo, who I have no doubt you cared for deeply, is dead and that is because you killed him. That is something you will have to live with."

Theo's mother said she would never forgive her ex-partner for what he had done.

Leanne Davies, the boy's mother and James' former girlfriend, said the most precious thing in her life had been taken away.



Youngster James Van Veen, a pupil at Church of the Ascension Primary School, with his winning design. He receives his prize from sponsor Sandra Walters from ND Walters and Headteacher Richard Green



Chronicle advertising sales supervisor Emma Parkes, left, presents Joel England, aged six, with his prize, with staff Miss White, centre, and Mrs Duckworth at Blackheath Primary School.

Chronicle Christmas design winners on the cards

CREATIVE youngsters received an early Christmas present when they were announced as winners of this year's Chronicle Christmas card competition.

James Van Veen, a pupil at Church of the Ascension Primary School, New Street, Wall Heath scooped first prize

in the Dudley edition of the competition, while Blackheath Primary School pupil Joel England won the Halesowen version. The boys had their designs framed with their names printed at the bottom, while the two schools received cheques for £50 after Chronicle readers had voted for their

favourites. Sandra Walters, of ND Walters which sponsored the Dudley competition, presented James with his prize alongside Church of the Ascension headteacher Richard Green.

She said: "James was delighted to win and he fully deserved it for such an excellent design."

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THE BEST OF PETER RHODES



OUR local carol service gets worse with every passing year. While we have come to accept all manner of strange carols from around the world, this is the first service I have attended where the carol sheet included Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer. For, lo, it is written: He'll go down in history.

□□□□□□□□

MAKES you proud to be British, doesn't it? I refer to the Yuletide fad for furry hats in the shape of lions, tigers, rabbits, frogs and so on. There are not many nations with the casual self-confidence to wander the streets looking like refugees from Regent's Park. You don't see chic Parisians sashaying down the Boulevard St Michel with a toad sur la tete. Come to think if it, the French never warmed to the shell suit, either. They miss so much.

□□□□□□□□

THIS time last year I suggested light-heartedly that 2011 would see the reappearance of the Deutschmark. It hasn't happened. But it is surprising how many websites are buzzing with rumours that Deutschmark Two is being printed.

□□□□□□□□

SNEEZY is a pantomime-season enigma. In 1937, Walt Disney named six of Snow White's Seven Dwarfs after the traditional male vices: Sleepy, Dopey, Grumpy and so on. So where does Sneezy fit in? I suspect (without an ounce of proof, it has to be said) that Sneezy is a 1930s euphemism for an altogether different bodily function. Discuss.

□□□□□□□□

RESEARCH shows that one of the most frequently asked questions on the internet in 2011 was: "What is scampi?" To which the answer is: "Whatever the restaurant thinks it can get away with." Curiously, that perennial Yuletide question does not even figure in this research, namely: "Is mulled wine alcoholic?"

□□□□□□□□

SHOCK, horror, drama. Prince Harry hears his best mate is being mugged. So HRH and his protection officer not only drive to the scene but go the nearest police station and report the offence. Medals all round. I wonder what the reaction of the cops was to Prince Harry and one of Special Branch's finest suddenly appearing at the station. Desk officers are past masters at persuading complainants that a stolen BlackBerry is more of an insurance matter than a crime or, if pushed, logging it in the book as lost property. For princes and their minders, I dare say different rules apply.

Don't miss Peter Rhodes every Monday to Friday in your Express & Star

£300,000 scheme to expand pools

A £300,000 scheme to transform two paddling pools into larger splash parks has been included in Wyre Forest District Council's budget for the coming year.

The authority plans to invest part of its capital funds to create the parks which would include larger pools and activities such as water jets.

There are four paddling pools in the district at Brinton Park and St

George's Park, in Kidderminster, at Riverside in Stourport and Northwood Lane Park, Bewdley. Chiefs said the existing pools were very popular with youngsters.

A decision on the two pools to be expanded and improved will be made in the New Year once the council has approved its budget for 2012/13. It had been decided to invest in the pools further to help boost the community.

Wyre Forest District Council leader Councillor John Campion said the scheme was in its early stages at the moment and would be developed further over the coming months.

"As a council we want to continue to invest in services for the community and to make the very best of the assets we have here in the district," he said. "We have four paddling pools in the area and all of them are

well used. This is a way of boosting activities in the community and investing in the services we already have. It is not creating something new but improving on what we already have to offer."

Councillor Campion said a date had not yet been set for when work would begin, but it was likely to be after April next year. He said money for the scheme had been set aside in next year's budget.

Fuel costs sees rise in people taking to bikes

CYCLING clubs are seeing membership numbers soaring as more and more people are ditching their cars to saddle up and take to the roads on their bicycles.

The popularity of the sport is on the rise as more people look at using cheaper modes of transport amid soaring prices at the petrol pumps.

They are also looking at the other benefits such as getting fit at the same time.

Cycle shop owners including Kevin Anson who runs Lower Gornal-based repair business Pedal Sense, in Ruiton Street, said over recent months they had seen an increase in the numbers of people who are taking up cycling.

The 45-year-old said: "A lot of people are coming into the shop and saying they are taking up cycling because of it's costing too much to run car."

"They are using their bikes because of the cost of fuel."

"I think the Olympics next year will also cause more people to take up cycling."

Wolverhampton Wheelers Cycling Club, which is based at Aldersley Stadium, has seen its membership jump from 300 to 350 this year alone.

Vice president Robin Kyte said: "We now have 350 members, which is the

biggest the club has ever been. We saw a big increase after the Beijing games and I'm sure we will see another increase next year with the London Olympics."

"I think people now see it has a lifestyle option which gives them a mode of transport and keeps them fit," added Mr Kyte.

At Stourbridge Cycling Club officials have recently celebrated reaching the 200 member mark - a first in its 47-year history.

Training

Membership secretary Bryan Hedges said the number of cyclists had grown from 150 since the start of the year.

Stafford Road Club, which organises both social and training rides, has seen numbers rise by around 50 per cent since the start of the year and the organisation now has more than 110 members.

The London Olympics are scheduled for next year and will be seen by millions of people across the globe.

Birmingham's Alexander Stadium will get a major refit so it will be ready for the massive sporting event in 2012.

Safety scheme for oldies

A **SAFETY** scheme for older people has been out and about in Halesowen, offering advice and support.

The Living Well, Feeling Safe scheme provides practical tips for older people aiming to make sure they are safe and secure at home. It is a partnership made up of Dudley Council, Age UK, West Midlands Police, Victim Support and West Midlands Fire Service. Staff from the scheme were recently out visiting homes in the Short Cross area of Halesowen as well as offering a drop-in service at Short Cross Methodist Church. The living well, feeling safe service offers free home assessments and advice to all older people, across Dudley borough. The service can be contacted on 01384 817743.

Student is mastering golf



Student Kathryn Brookes, aged 17, who is proving to be a natural at golf

A **SPORTS** student has mastered the art of golf and has got her skill off to a tee by playing golf for Staffordshire county.

Kathryn Brookes, who is a second year BTEC Extended Diploma Level 3 student at Stourbridge College plays golf for Penn Golf Club but also plays for the county as vice captain for county girls.

She is hoping to become captain at the

end of the year. The 17-year-old from Lower Gornal, has been playing golf for four years and has competed in various competitions including the 2011 Midland Junior Champion of Champions.

She said: "My handicap is seven, which is good considering I've only been playing for four years. My dad got me into the sport while we were on holiday."

thechronicle

16 Arrests in day of action by officers

SIXTEEN arrests were made in the Midlands during a day of action against suspected drugs crimes, assaults and bail-dodgers. Police turned up at homes in North Worcestershire.

The arrests were made under a wider operation on the West Mercia patch.

Four arrests were made in total in Wyre Forest - three on drugs offences and one for failing to answer bail.

Two men were arrested at a property in Broad Street on suspicion of possessing Class A drugs.

Elsewhere in Wyre Forest police went to a house in Windsor Drive, Kidderminster, and arrested a man who was wanted on warrant. He was taken to Kidderminster Magistrates Court.

Another man was arrested in the town at Gould Avenue East during the execution of a drugs warrant obtained under the Misuse of Drugs Act. The man, who is in his 30s, was cautioned after he was found in possession of a small amount of cannabis.

In Bromsgrove a raid in Charford led to a man in his 40s being arrested for failing to appear in court. Another warrant led to the arrest of a man on suspicion of voyeurism.

Volunteers digging in

VOLUNTEERS dug deep to help build raised garden beds and fencing at a Dudley community centre.

The group of Npower workers from Birch House in Oldbury were helping out at the base in Pensnett.

Chairman of the centre's voluntary committee, Elaine Blakeway, said she was delighted with the work which has made the garden ready for vegetable planting.

"We are a busy community centre, open seven days a week and the heavy work done by our volunteers, will mean we can start gardening and cookery workshops."

Evening of soul

SOUL fans can enjoy an evening of classic hits performed by a popular band at a concert in Dudley. Soul Survivors will take to the stage at Dudley Concert Hall, St James's Road, on February 11 from 7.30pm. Tickets for the show are £13 from Dudley Box Office. It will feature songs by Otis Redding.

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Region to be given £1m boost

MORE than £1 million of taxpayers' money is set to be ploughed into boosting regeneration in Wyre Forest, under plans announced by council bosses.

Wyre Forest District Council will use the money to help regenerate the district in 2012/2013, despite officials having to cut costs next year in a move which will see more staff members lose their jobs.

The regeneration plan comes as council bosses announced they would carry out a review of services in a bid to save the hundreds of thousands of pounds.

The proposed net budget for 2012/13 is £12.6m, a reduction of almost £1m or seven per cent compared with the current financial year.

This follows a cut in the grant that the council receives from the Government of £850,000.

Council chiefs say they are looking to make further savings through reviewing the way the council delivers services across the authority in a bid to save around £800,000.

Cabinet Councillor Nathan Desmond said: "Securing the economic prosperity of the district is one of our priorities."

Computer scam alert

RESIDENTS in Wyre Forest are being warned not to fall for a computer repair scam currently doing the rounds.

Worcestershire Regulatory Services, trading standards team say this year has seen a rise in the number of "computer repair" calls originating from overseas.

Individuals from outside of the UK are making unsolicited calls to local residents advising them that their computers have faults and they can offer to fix them.

Officials are saying that under no circumstances should anyone allow remote access to their computers.

Union plans

HAGLEY Mothers' Union is preparing to celebrate the centenary of its branch during next year. The group will meet on January 19 at 2.30pm at St Saviour's Church Hall, Hagley, to consider what events to plan in order to mark and celebrate the 100th anniversary which will take place sometime in 2012.

Make my town one of the pilots, pleads MP

AN MP is urging retail guru Mary Portas to choose his West Midlands town as a pilot project for her bid to save Britain's struggling high streets – after it was revealed to be one of the worst in the country for empty shops.

Her report for the Government on the decline of town centres says years of neglect and the growth of online shopping and the march of supermarkets has left many areas "dying".

She is making 28 recommendations to boost flagging high streets, including new "town teams" which will be there to make improvements.

Dudley North MP Ian Austin welcomed the report and said he would write to Ms Portas to try to convince her to pick Dudley as one of the towns where her ideas will be tested out.

Some 29 per cent of shops in the town are empty, giving it the highest vacancy rate of any medium sized town in the country.

This is compared to 25 per cent in Wolverhampton, 8.5 per cent in Lichfield and six per cent in Stafford.

Mr Austin met up with Ms Portas in Parliament earlier in the year, when he shared the results of a constituency survey on the state of Dudley high street.

It showed strong support for more parking and support for lowering business rates and bringing empty shops back into use.

Mr Austin said: "I think we've got to be much more ambitious for our town and come up with a new plan to bring people to Dudley."

"Hopefully this review will lead to concrete proposals that will help boost our town centre."

"Mary Portas has said that several towns will be chosen to run pilot schemes to test her recommendations and I'll be writing to her to urge her to consider making Dudley one of these."

Ms Portas said: "I fundamentally believe that once we invest in and create social capital in the heart of our communities, the economic capital will follow."

She has recommended that councils need to work together with shoppers and traders to come up with solutions as to how town centres can be updated or in some cases saved.

Ms Portas has also highlighted the need to reduce red tape and improve car parking while at the same time using facilities like town centre gyms to attract more people to the shopping areas and help towards a revival.

Bring back the market days says shops guru Mary Portas

THE return of market days and the scrapping of red tape – this is how shopping guru Mary Portas will propose Britain's struggling high streets are saved.

The internet and the rise of supermarkets has left the traditional high streets and shopping centres struggling to pull in the customers. It has fallen to the star of Mary Queen of Shops, in a project set up by Prime Minister David Cameron, to try to provide the answer.

She has unveiled 28 recommendations and said: "Town centres are so outdated how they work, they are modelled on the 1960s. This is 2011 going into 2012. We need 'town teams' – a body of people who work together to create what they want their towns to be."

She said shoppers will work as 'co-creators' with council and retail bosses to decide how town centres should serve the public.

It comes as new research published by the Government revealed a third of high streets are "degenerating or failing".

By 2014 less than 40 per cent of retail spending will be on the high street, according to the study, which also found over the past decade out-of-town retail floorspace has increased by almost a third, while in towns it has shrunk

by 14 per cent. She is also tackling parking – vowing to "free up the red tape" and suggested putting gyms in town centres to get more people into them.

She said: "Our high streets can be lively, dynamic, exciting and social places that give a sense of belonging and trust to a community. Something which, as the recent riots clearly demonstrated, has been eroded and in some instances eradicated."

Alan Caswell, who has traded in Dudley town centre for 40 years, welcomed the report but said the Government and councillors need to "listen to local people who know what the area needs".

Campaigned

Mr Caswell, 57, who runs the Arcade Toy shop in the Fountain Arcade, has campaigned for extra parking in the town. He added: "Dudley is a classic market town and it has been there for as long as anyone can remember."

"But there is more to a town than just a market and they need to look at the bigger picture," added Mr Caswell.

Empty stores in town

DUDLEY has more shops standing empty – 29 per cent – than any other town centre of a similar size in the country, a recent survey revealed. But the marketplace is set to undergo a £6 million revamp, including additional parking, new footpaths, improved controlled crossing points and new cycle parking in Castle Street, as well as improvements to the steps and frontage of St Edmunds Church. Plans are also being made for a new supermarket in Tower Street, with several national chains believed to be interested.



Owner Sarah Barnes with her cupcake gurus Laura Davis, Gemma Smith and Jenny Stevens launch the Blue Door Bakery school at The Old Wood Yard

Bakery's sweet taste of success

TOP tips on creating the perfect cakes will be served up by a bakery which has opened in the grounds of a 18th century Midlands manor house.

Blue Door Bakery was set up in the Worcestershire home of Sarah Barnes supplying cupcakes for all kinds of special occasions such as weddings.

But now the bakery has been so successful that it is expanding to new premises within The Old Woodyard at Hagley Hall, near Stourbridge.

Cake classes and workshops will be run by her cupcake gurus at the bakery where they will be teaching budding cupcake chefs the techniques behind the creations.

Past pupil turned employee Jenny Stevens, aged 25, says the bakery has been going from strength-to-strength and needed to expand.

"It is a great place to work and these new premises are a prefect location for us," she said.

"We did not want to lose the homemade bakery qualities that we started with and The Old Woodyard is very quaint," she added.

A great number of people lined up to sample some of the bakery's produce which were on display at a special open evening held recently at the premises in Hall Drive.

NEWS in brief

Dying days of old hospital on DVD

THE "dying days" of a hospital feature in a new film – shot by a former cook who worked there for nearly 30 years.

Elaine Shuttleworth, now aged 56, of Penn, Wolverhampton, filmed interviews with colleagues at Wordsley Hospital in the run-up to its closure in 2005. She and her partner Philip Mousley recently completed compiling the DVD, entitled Those Good Old Days.

For more information call 01902 338162.

Library to close for asbestos work

BRIERLEY Hill Library will close for one week in the New Year after asbestos was discovered by contractors.

The High Street library will have to shut its doors from January 9.

Asbestos was found on the second floor of the library forcing Dudley Council to close the area off.

From January 9 the area will be treated and the asbestos removed in a protected and sealed environment, according to officials at the council.

Festive market opening times

DUDLEY Market has announced its Christmas opening hours.

It will remain open throughout the festive period from 8am to 4pm apart from Boxing Day, December 27 and January 2 when it will be closed.

Councillor Tim Wright, said: "Dudley Market has a great atmosphere at Christmas and offers a fantastic selection of goods."

Christmas cards sent to suspects

SUSPECTED burglars in Wyre Forest are being sent Christmas cards by police telling them they will be caught.

They are being targeted by Crimestoppers. Nearly 10,000 cards are being delivered to addresses in areas across Worcestershire which are alerting suspected thieves they have nowhere to hide.

Homes planned

PLANS for two semi-detached houses on land in Stourbridge have been lodged with the council. The homes would be built between Clinic Drive and Jackson Street in Lye.

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Fresh plea to solve the mystery of missing teen

A FRESH appeal has been launched in a bid to solve the eight-year-old mystery of the disappearance of a teenage mother from her Black Country home.

Natalie Putt was aged just 17 when she vanished after leaving her home in Dudley in September 2003.

Her half-sister Rachel Coggins, aged 34, says she still buys Natalie a present every Christmas to lay underneath the tree in the hope that she will return.

"There isn't a day that passes when I don't think of her, what happened to her, where is she now?" said Rachel.

"I have this feeling that she is somewhere close."

"But I guess in some ways no news is good news, it comforts me in a way as it gives you hope that she is out there."

The family have been working with the national charity Missing People to try to jog memories about her disappearance. Missing People works to try to find around 100,000 under 18s who disappear in the UK every year.

Awareness

Mrs Coggins, who now lives in Nottingham with her husband and four children, says they are still working on ways to raise awareness.

More than 4,000 people have joined a group on Facebook to raise awareness of the campaign to discover the whereabouts of Natalie.

It displays several photographs of Natalie including a computer-generated image showing how she may look now.

It uses specific facial features including cheek bones and hairlines from her late mother Jennifer and sisters Lowri and Rebecca.

Natalie, of Thornleigh, Lower Gornal, went missing on September 1, 2003, when she left her home to go to a shop. Anyone who has any information can call police on 0845 113 5000.

Governor is to stay in touch



Paul Hill on screen with, top, Roger Timmins and, bottom left, headteacher Russell Hinton and Paul Roberts at the Brier School

A GOVERNOR at a Kingswinford school was so keen to ensure he did not miss a meeting while away on business in America that he went to extreme lengths to be there.

With the help of school staff, Paul Hill organised for a video link to be set up between the Brier School and New York so he could ensure he can have his input.

It is the first time the school has carried out a meeting over the inter-

net and it is believed to be the first one in the borough to try out it out.

Mr Hill, who works for Cisco Systems, is vice-chairman of the governors' board and so it was important for him to be involved the full governors' meeting as only one is held each term.

Headteacher Russell Hinton said they had carried out a dummy-run the previous week to ensure all of the technology was in place.

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Size matters over Parliament

PAT McFadden quite rightly argues that Local Community identity is a key issue in looking at the way we wish to be seen and democratically represented.

What we are missing in this debate is the need to fundamentally question the functions and therefore the composition and size of Westminster Parliament; what is best dealt with at the regional, the local and national levels.

What is the case for 600 or 200 MPs? It's argued we still need 600 so that all constituencies are roughly the same size in terms of voters and that they maintain the local link. Clearly not all

constituencies will generate the same amount of local work and more fundamentally we need to question why members of the Parliament should be spending much of their time and tax payers resources on local issues.

We all know that people do not stay still, they move around and the populations of local areas go up and down.

It is inevitable with the approach proposed that boundaries will continually have to be revised.

So much for the argument that the link between MPs and the local is paramount.

With Scotland, Wales, Northern Ire-

land and more especially London, well down the devolution track with more to come, the functions of Westminster and its size and costs have to be questioned. We are in sight of Westminster becoming, on domestic matters, a wholly English Parliament with decisions about policies in Newcastle, Penzance and Dudley all being taken in London or by its agents. England is too complex for this approach to be sustainable and any outcomes, rather than numbers an alternative is needed.

GEORGE MORRAN
Woodsetton
Dudley

A festive greeting to knights of the road

I WOULD like to say a great big Christmas thank you to the two gentlemen who stopped to assist us on Saturday December 10 near to Essington Fruit Farm, when we had a puncture on our car.

We tried for nearly an hour to see if it would inflate with the compressor, all to no avail, but when it came to replacing it with the spare wheel, my husband could not get the punctured wheel off the car, I was just about to phone for assistance when the two gentlemen stopped.

Needless to say we were very cold, but all thanks to two gentlemen's help in replacing the wheel we got home safely. So with our thanks and best wishes, we hope they have an enjoyable Christmas and New Year.

MR & MRS T A JORDAN
Peartree Lane
Coseley

LETTERS to the Editor

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Letters should be brief and MUST include name, address and telephone number of the writer. The Editor reserves the right to condense letters.

Nothing funny about Royal Variety show

WHILE at a loss for anything better to do, I foolishly decided to watch the Royal Variety performance show on TV for the first time in years.

What a show it turned out to be. It was compered (if one can describe such antics as being a comper) by Peter Kay. He seemed to wander aimlessly on and off the stage holding a handful of cards on which were written the names and descriptions of each of the "acts" he was about to introduce.

We were treated to a sombre-faced seemingly endless procession of so-called comedians, the best of which was about as humorous as a dental appointment involving root canal surgery. I quickly slipped into a state of deep melancholia thinking back to the halcyon days of the likes of Bob Hope, Jack Benny, Milton Berle, Danny Kaye; of our own Jimmy Tarbuck, Tommy Cooper Morecambe and Wise, The Two Ronnies, who could ever forget Freddy Starr's Hilarious send up of Mick Jagger?

All in all I think the show was an abysmal failure.

P PARSONS,
Coseley

Consider other dog walkers in public

FOR the past six months a friend of mine has enjoyed walking her entire male puppy over a nearby common.

However, these daily walks have recently been spoiled owing to the thoughtless actions of another dog walker. Someone has persisted in walking their bitch, who is in season, off the lead on the common.

My friend has been asked to "call her dog" who is being a "nuisance" to this owner's animal, I wonder why. It is irresponsible to walk a bitch in season, off the lead, in a public place, where dogs are also exercised. Do they not know that male dogs can detect her scent for long distances?

One inconsiderate dog owner can spoil it for the majority.

JACKIE WORTON
Pensnett
Brierley Hill

LETTERS

Gratitude of legion

ON behalf of Lower Gornal Royal British Legion we would like to thank everyone who supported the poppy appeal and contributed to the Remembrance Day and service.

We are pleased to announce the sales of poppies together with generous donations from the local community totalled £7,300.

It is a fantastic amount; we rely on support from local businesses and the community and wish to thank everyone involved.

DON OAKLEY
Poppy Organiser

Thanks to everyone

WE would like to thank all the people who took part in the raffle for the dolls' house which was donated by John Waterhouse of Wordsley.

The total raised for Midlands Air Ambulance was £128 and the winning ticket, drawn by Pastor Colin Hambley from Netherton, was purchased by Mrs Robinson of Kingswinford.

YVONNE SMART &
CATHY GLEAR
Kingswinford

Collection

RECENTLY, the Rotary Club of Stourbridge held a charity collection at Morrisons supermarket, Stallings Lane, Kingswinford. The collection raised a splendid £2,508. I would like to thank Simon Woolley, manager at Morrisons for allowing us to collect.

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thechronicle

THE WAY I SEE IT

Significant turn of events in relationship with EU allies

LAST week was hugely significant for our relationship with our European neighbours and allies.

The Prime Minister, David Cameron, said he would protect Britain's national interests at the European Council and he would veto anything that did not protect our national interests.

I am proud and pleased our PM kept his commitment to the British people – in doing so he has my full backing and, I believe, the strong support of the vast majority of people in our borough.

We want the Eurozone to succeed and to sort out its problems but we cannot be liable for the Eurozone's bills.

The House of Commons European Union Scrutiny Select Committee, of which I am a member, has announced a new inquiry into the Eurozone crisis.

I am very much looking forward to participating in this important Parliamentary inquiry.

The crisis on the continent is having a freezing effect on the UK economy and also locally here in the Black Country where our manufacturers have traditionally exported in large quantities to Europe.

I pressed the Prime Minister to commit the Government to providing even more

Dudley South Conservative MP Chris Kelly takes the stand in our weekly Chronicle column which gives our local representatives the chance to air their views on issues that matter



For details visit www.conservatives.com/policecommissioners

I enjoyed singing carols at the borough Christmas carol service at All Saints' Church, Sedgley with Mayor Cllr Michael Evans and consort Cllr Sue Greenaway. The wonderful children's choir was undoubtedly the highlight.

I attended a regular meeting of borough MPs with the Leader of Dudley MBC, Cllr Les Jones, and the Chief Executive at Council House.

I recently visited our troops in Afghanistan so I'm particularly pleased to report that, following my request, Cllr Jones and Dudley Council are moving forward with signing the Ministry of Defence's Armed Forces Community Covenant (see www.chriskellymp.com for more details).

I joined the Prime Minister on his visit to the Black Country. At Krunch at Sandwell Christian Centre in Oldbury, David Cameron and Eric Pickles, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, set out the Government's plans to turn around the lives of the country's 120,000 most troubled families.

All that remains is for me to wish all readers a very merry Christmas and a happy new year. Chris Kelly can be contacted on 01384 211 041 or via office@chriskellymp.com.

assistance to help British businesses export to emerging markets in the Far East and South America.

I have seen for myself locally successful, growing manufacturers who are finding profitable business in growth countries such as Brazil, Mexico and also several Asian countries.

The Eurozone crisis shows we must be ever more outward looking as a country, recognising and taking up the trade opportunities which undoubtedly exist in this highly globalised era outside the borders of the continent of Europe.

A sizeable majority of Members of European Scrutiny Committee chaired by my friend – fellow West Midlands, arch Eurosceptic, veteran MP Bill Cash – strongly support the PM's use of the veto last week.

However, the resolution of the Eurozone crisis – with or without Treaty change – is vitally important for the UK economy; this inquiry

will provide important information for the Government and Parliament when considering Britain's role vis-à-vis that of other EU member states and EU institutions.

This week I called for Conservative candidates for the role of West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner to come forward.

By this time next year we will have had the first ever elections for this important new role. Police and Crime Commissioners will have specific responsibility to:

- work with the communities in their force area and identify their policing needs
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- appoint – and, if necessary, remove – the Chief Constable

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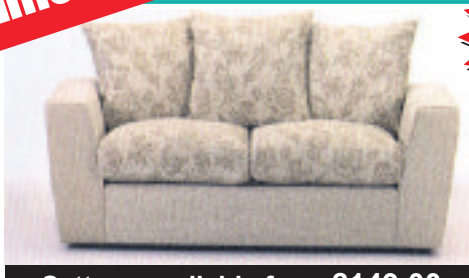
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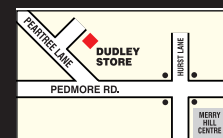
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thechronicle

Indoors compost buckets on offer

RESIDENTS in Wyre Forest are being urged to compost their food leftovers – using buckets in their homes.

Worcestershire County Council is offering the £13 buckets to households to try Bokashi, a Japanese word meaning “fermented organic matter”.

Bokashi is a composting system that can be done inside a kitchen using specially designed buckets.

The buckets work by using the fermentation process. Particles of Bokashi Bran – which come with the kit – are sprinkled over the food waste.

The process takes about three weeks, after which the liquid collected can be diluted and used as fertiliser for plants. The fermented contents of the bucket can be buried and makes an organic fertiliser for the soil.

Councillor Anthony Blagg said: “This is a brilliant idea because a significant proportion of what is ending up in landfill comes from organic waste, that’s the likes of garden waste and kitchen leftovers. It makes sense to find new ways of disposing of it.”

Christopher Atkinson, senior waste prevention officer, said: “Vegetable peelings, teabags and other food scraps and leftovers, and also meat can be recycled without using an outdoor bin.”

The buckets are available from Bubble House Worms, on 01886 832559.

Region hit by a spate of ‘cat’ thefts from motors

HUNDREDS of catalytic converters have been ripped from parked cars in Staffordshire and the West Midlands this year by thieves.

They are cashing in on soaring metal prices, according to latest figures. A total of 267 catalytic converters have been taken from vehicles across the Black Country since the start of the year and a further 87 in Staffordshire since April. Dudley has been the worst hit with nearly three times the number of thefts compared to any other area in the region.

There has been a spate of thefts across the borough, with 142 catalytic converters being stolen so far this year.

Police have now launched a crackdown called Operation Boss Cat to try to stop opportunistic thieves targeting vehicles left on the roadside.

Officers are increasing patrols and visits to known scrap dealers across the area in a bid to deter thieves.

Affected

The minibus belonging to Dudley’s Woodsetton School had its catalytic converter stolen in October.

Pc Sean Lowe, from Dudley’s Local Priority Team, said: “Motorists and businesses are being affected by this trend, as a number of vehicles are being targeted particularly vans. In the current climate and with precious metal prices still rising, the demand for parts that contain them is growing.”

As a result, the risk of theft of catalytic converters is on the increase again. Brierley Hill and Pensnett have seen several thefts of this kind, and patrols will incorporate the current hot spot areas of crime, whilst also concentrating on the scrap merchants which may be receiving the stolen goods.

In Dudley, officers are giving out equipment for MoT garages to security mark catalytic converters when vehicles are taken in, which they hope could help track down parts at scrap yards.

Pupils’ date with hospital



Becky Essom, aged 16, Kirsty Young, 15, with, back left, Stacey Longfield, 15, and Sophie Williams, 16, and Russells Hall Hospital fundraising co-ordinator Karen Phillip

FUNDRAISERS at a Sandwell school have created a calendar to help raise hundreds of pounds for a Black Country hospital.

Students involved in a Prince’s Trust project at Oldbury Academy have been selling charity calendars they put together themselves to raise money for the neo-natal unit at Dudley’s Russells Hall Hospital.

They spent a morning in the foyer of the hospital selling the calendars to staff, patients and members of the public.

The calendars had a healthy-eating theme, with recipes for each month of the year created by the youngsters.

Wildlife trust in plea for photos

WORCESTERSHIRE Wildlife Trust is inviting residents across the county – and as far as Stourbridge – to enter an annual photography competition.

The conservation charity is looking for photographs that reflect the diversity of the local countryside and wildlife – and the winning entries will feature in the trust’s 2013 calendar, which will be on sale from May.

Wendy Carter, communications manager for the trust, said: “The competition is now in its third year and we’re constantly impressed by the photographs that are entered.”

“We’ve had between 150 and 200 entries per competition so far which doesn’t necessarily sound like a lot but we have great difficulty choosing the winning shots.”

“We’re looking for images that really capture a moment – whether that’s a field of dancing wildflowers, the struggle for a species to survive a harsh winter or a person’s encounter with wildlife.”

“All we ask is that any images entered have been taken on one of our 70 plus nature reserves.”

Entry forms are available to download from the trust’s website www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk and the closing date is February 13. Order forms for this year’s calendar can be downloaded from the website or bought direct by contacting 01905 754919.

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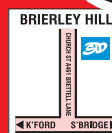
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WM Pugh Butchers, in Smethwick, displaying a feast of festive food



Margaret Millington steams the Christmas pudding over the range oven fire

Orange and coal in your stocking if you're lucky

Black Country Living Museum's Fiona Carding looks at how the region's families would have celebrated Christmas in the 1900s.

IF YOU'RE having to tighten your purse strings this Christmas then spare a thought for your great-grandparents who would have worked up until lunchtime on Christmas Day and would have been lucky to find an orange and a piece of coal at the bottom of their stocking.

Children were at the centre of the festive celebrations, as they are now, but festivities focused on food rather than giving presents. Many mothers started paying a penny a week into the sweet shop 12 weeks before Christmas, putting aside sweets for children's stockings. These would have included things like sugar mice and pigs, sugar fancies, sticks of rainbow rock and liquorice pipes.

Turkey, tinsel and all the trimmings were off the menu in a typical Black Country household and instead a good plump cockerel,

MEMORY LANE
by Fiona Carding

roast rabbit or pork from home-reared pigs would be the special meal of the day.

Chicken or pork would be hung on a rotisserie in front of the range oven fire and the dripping fat would be caught in a tray below.

Some of the fat would be used for gravy and the rest would be saved for pastry making and to spread on bread for sandwiches. The meat would be served with homegrown potatoes and vegetables in season.

The first preparations for Christmas would be the Christmas pudding which would be made on Stir-Up Sunday (the last Sunday of Advent). It would be made with plums, possibly a few sultanas, suet, eggs and spices like nutmeg and cinnamon. A spiced-up version of bread pudding was used as a cheap substitute for Christmas

pudding. Families would put a sixpence (2.5p) or threepenny bit (1.5p) inside the pudding for luck.

Few working class families had a Christmas tree in the early 1900s. Instead decorations were made of holly or wooden hoops from butter barrels and trimmed with coloured paper. Bundles of chocolate were hung on the 'tree', but were supposedly not to be eaten until after Twelfth Night.

Christmas was far less commercial and more charitable too. Year-round donations from community members and benevolent trusts ensured even the poorest in society weren't forgotten. In 1904, Christmas in West Bromwich Workhouse began with carols played on a gramophone and breakfast served in the decorated dining hall, followed by a Christmas service conducted by the chaplain. Gifts were provided including a Christmas letter to each inmate and sweets, crackers and pennies for children.

Visit www.bclm.com for further information.



Volunteers Margaret and Les Millington enjoy a typical 1900s Christmas lunch at Black Country Living Museum.

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thechronicle

Refugee who made his mark in sports world dies, aged 83

A GREAT-GRANDFATHER who fled the post-World War Two Communist regime in Yugoslavia to work down the mines, later setting up home in Stourbridge, has died, aged 83.

Alexander Fojan and brother George "grabbed everything they had" before setting off to Britain in 1945, agreeing to work in oppressive conditions at the Jubilee Colliery in West Bromwich and mines in Cannock in exchange for asylum.

He married wife Joan in 1954 and the couple moved to Pedmore in 1959.

A talented sportsman, he was a well-known face around the pubs of Stourbridge and beyond as a regular dominoes and darts player.

Mrs Fojan said he would buy anyone a drink and was always first to put his hand

in his pocket. "That's just the way he was," she said. "He worked hard and played hard."

"He was just the most wonderful husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather that anyone could ever wish for. He had an absolute heart of gold and we will all miss him terribly."

Mr Fojan, who also leaves three children, six grandchildren and five great-grandchildren, died at Russells Hall Hospital on December 1 after a long illness.

A keen West Bromwich Albion fan who had trials with Stoke City on his arrival in the county, he was also one of the region's top table-tennis players.

Mrs Fojan, of Cherry Tree Court, Pedmore, said despite her husband's Yugoslavian heritage he was more patriotic than she was.

'Dudley Dorito' is spotted

A mysterious triangular UFO dubbed the Dudley Dorito has reappeared in the region's skies with the latest sighting reported near a beauty spot.

Property worker Gary Nock and his family were on the car park of the Badgers Sett pub, Hagley, when they saw the distinctive object flying overhead.

The 52-year-old said that the UFO, a black triangle with white lights at each corner, was flying at low altitude and coming from the direction of Birmingham.

He said the object had turned silently in the air and they had eventually lost sight of it as it passed over the Clent Hills.

The sighting occurred at around 6.40pm on December 14 and Mr Nock immediately looked it up information about it on the internet when he returned home.

And he said the UFO bore a close resemblance to the "Dudley Dorito" which was first spotted over the skies of the Black Country a few years ago.

Mr Nock said he, his wife Susan, daughter Claire and her boyfriend Jamie Burgoyne had just arrived at the pub to have a meal.

"We were just getting out of the car when we saw this object overhead. It was very low in the sky and could easily be seen," he said.

Aircraft

"At first I thought it could have been a jet but no aircraft has those types of lights to my knowledge."

"It banked to the one side and made no sound whatsoever which was also strange."

"It was so low we lost sight of it over the tree line of the Clent Hills."

"When we got back Jamie and I looked it up on

the internet and saw the stories about the Dudley Dorito and what we saw does bear a resemblance to it."

Mr Nock said that he believed the craft could be an military plane that is in the experimental stages.

"I know about planes but have never seen anything like this."

"It does look a little like a B2 stealth plane but that makes a sound this one did not. It is a mystery."

It is the latest in a long list of sightings over the Black Country which have been reported over the last few years.

The UFO was last seen earlier this year by security officer Glyn Richards while in the back garden of his home in Quarry Bank.

The alleged UFO has also been spotted over several other areas of the Black Country including Tipton, Brierley Hill and Oldbury.

Centre hits 25 years



Members with the mayor, councillor Michael Evans, left, treasurer Robert Chesworth and chairman Dennis Eaves

THE history of a well-used community centre is being honoured, as part of the celebrations to mark its 25th anniversary.

Sedgley Community Centre opened in 1986 as a focal point for the town to host all manner of events and activities.

The association which runs the centre, in Ladies Walk, invited the Mayor of Dudley and Sedgley councillor Michael Evans to enjoy a community day and to help mark the milestone.

Past memories, anecdotes and stories have been retold by members of the Sedgley and District Community Association in a booklet which they have produced to mark the occasion.

A choir from Dormston School and the St Andrews Singers performed at the event for more than 100 visitors. Centre management committee chairman Dennis Eaves, aged 78, said everyone was delighted with how the celebrations went.

Council is planning to freeze tax rates

COUNCIL tax rates in Wyre Forest could be frozen next year under new proposals. The move is set to be discussed at a meeting of the district council's cabinet and if agreed it will be the second year in a row the district council's element of the tax has not been increased.

Councils have been awarded a grant from the government equivalent to a 2.5 per cent council tax increase if they freeze the levy on residents.

Councillor Nathan Desmond of Wyre Forest district council, said: "We have seen a drop in income and we are well aware that residents are finding this a difficult time too."

"I am pleased that we are able to secure a freeze in the district council's element of the council tax for 2012-13, by using the grant that the Government is offering."

"This does however create difficulties because the grant is only for one year and will therefore permanently reduce council tax income." Dudley Council has yet to announce whether it will freeze its council tax.

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Roadworks on hold to boost trade

AN 18-month roadworks scheme in Dudley will take a break over the festive period to help boost traders.

Since April many streets in the town centre have been closed for work by numerous utilities firms.

Dudley Council, which is co-ordinating the programme, said today there would be a break until January 9 to help shoppers.

The New Year phase of the work will see work on the Wolverhampton Street/High Street and Union Street junction.

The roadworks programme will affect a total of 64 roads in the town centre.

Pleased

Cabinet member for transport Councillor Patrick Harley said: "The works have been progressing well since they started earlier in the year and I am pleased that we are able to cease works over Christmas."

"This is a critical programme of co-ordinated works and it's not been a straight forward scheme by any stretch."

"However we have aimed to keep disruption to a minimum by only closing roads completely when absolutely necessary and by keeping car parks open."

"I would like to thank traders and shoppers for their patience."

Pubs targeted by arsonists in a 'sad sign of the times'

FIRES have broken out at dozens of pubs in the Black Country and Staffordshire during the past two years, according to new figures.

The study claims that more than half of the blazes have been deliberately started by arsonists.

Both vacant and open pub have been hit. Vandals were to blame for 30 of the 54 fires at drinking houses in the Black Country between April 2009 and March 2011.

Among the fire-hit pubs in the Black Country were the Jolly Nailor, West Bromwich, and The New Highcroft, Wolverhampton, which has since been demolished and replaced.

Both of the buildings, which were derelict at the time, were left badly damaged by the flames and smoke.

Chairman of the Dudley and South Staffordshire branch of Canra, Stan Stephens, said recently it was a "sad" sign of the times that pubs were being targeted by arsonists and destroyed in this way.

"It is a great pity," he said. "When these pubs have closed and been left boarded up they will attract youths who have very little to do. I don't know what can be done about

it. "What would be nice is if they could be taken over and resurrected like a few of them such as The Grange freehouse in Dudley have been," added Mr Stevens.

"It was vandalised but has now reopened," he said.

The figures also revealed that the remaining blazes during the two-year period logged by West Midlands Fire Service were accidental rather than the work of vandals or arsonists. There were 18 fires at pubs in Dudley, 15 in Sandwell, 11 in Wolverhampton and 10 in Walsall.

Accidental

They include The Gypsies Tent Inn on the corner of Steppingstone Street, Dudley, where firefighters have tackled small blazes over a period of time.

The pub is now set to be transformed into a 10-bed care home under new plans given the go-ahead in October.

While in Staffordshire there were at least 15 fires reported at pubs in Stafford, Lichfield, Cannock and Kinver between April 2009 and March 2011.

Four of the blazes were recorded as arson by Staffordshire Fire Service according to figures which were released under the Freedom of Information Act.

A festive call for recycling

WYRE Forest District Council is urging people to recycle their rubbish over the Christmas period which is the busiest time of the year for collections.

Residents are also being asked to ensure bins are placed on the kerbside by 6am until January 13 in case of changes to collection times.

All items which need to go for recycling should also be placed loose within the bin as carrier bags or bin liners cannot be recycled through the green bins.

Cabinet member for environment services on Wyre Forest District Council councillor said it had been a successful year for recycling in the area and they had achieved excellent results.

"The rate now stands at 30 per cent which is an excellent achievement," he said.

"We are proud of the measures we have in place here in Wyre Forest."

School gets grading up to outstanding

A MIDLAND school has improved by two grades to be given the top rating by Ofsted inspectors.

Burlish Park Primary in Stourport was rated "satisfactory" - grade three out of four - in 2008 but has now been classed as "outstanding".

Three years ago concerns were raised that some pupils were not progressing at the same rate as others.

But this time the youngsters were praised for "outstanding progress academically and personally" and for exceptional achievement.

The report by inspector Patricia Potthecary said: "The school is a very happy, vibrant and productive learning community, where high quality, stimulating teaching takes place throughout the day."

Attitude

"Pupils are rarely off task in lessons and are exceptionally keen to reach the next level in their work."

"This highly motivated attitude is evident in a very wide range of subjects, from their impressive enthusiasm in music and topic lessons to their inquisitiveness and enjoyment when a planetarium visited the school."

Headteacher Janet Bickerton was singled out for being "exceptional in improving the school".

Mrs Bickerton said: "This has only been feasible because absolutely everyone has been totally dedicated to working as hard as possible to be the very best school imaginable."

Grandson ups pace to help



Front from left, Thomas Attwood, 15, Kennedy Shields, eight, and Cameron Scott, seven, back from left, Tom Jordan, 19, and Jack Wilkes, 15, starting a protest walk oppose plans to close New Bradley Hall in Compton Drive

A DEVOTED grandson put his best foot forward to help the plight of his grandfather and other residents at a closure-threatened Kingswinford care home.

Summerhill School pupil Thomas Attwood, aged 15, organised a sponsored walk from New Bradley Hall in Compton Drive to Dudley Council House in aid of a fundraising campaign.

He was joined by other teenagers who also have relatives living at the care home, which has been earmarked for closure by Dudley Council.

Although leaders have agreed to look at the plans again following protests from residents and their families, campaigners are

pushing ahead with their legal battle to fight the proposals.

Thomas, who makes several visits a week to see his grandfather Fred, aged 77, at New Bradley Hall, said the walk was to raise awareness of the campaign.

Carried

He said he wanted to keep it "in the public eye so everybody knows what's happening."

The walkers carried campaign signs as they walked along the roads to the council house.

Cash raised by the walk will go towards the £3,000 needed by the New Bradley Hall action group for initial legal fees.

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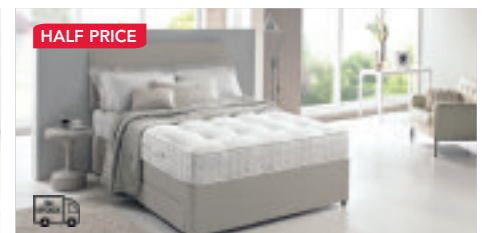
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Free parking scrapped

FREE parking for disabled visitors has been scrapped at Kidderminster Hospital after bosses agreed to press ahead with the scheme.

Signs which are displayed at the site are now being altered to inform visitors to the hospital of the changes.

But campaigners have criticised bosses for the charges just before Christmas saying there was no official announcement.

Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust announced the plans to axe free disabled parking in September but said no final decision had been made.

Health bosses said they were now looking to

offer help to anyone struggling to pay the charges.

Mark Lawley, of Disability Action Wyre Forest, today said he was shocked to find signs saying blue badge holders can park for free had been scrubbed out.

Smaller signs informing people that charges apply to everyone have now been put in place on the site.

Publicised

He said: "These charges are pure greed and it doesn't seem fair that they have been introduced so close to Christmas."

"This has not been widely publicised and no announcement has been made."

Charges will also be introduced at Redditch's

Alexandra Hospital and Worcestershire Royal in Worcester.

The trust argues that money raised from car parking – which already brings in more than £1 million a year – goes towards providing front-line services.

Trust spokeswoman Janet-Marie Clark said: "Campaigners were aware of the plans and knew a decision was due to be made later this year."

Chris Tidman, acting chief executive for the trust, said the charges "will ensure that we can continue to cover the cost of providing car parking infrastructure in as fair a way as possible, as well as ensuring that any surplus income we receive will help to support front line care."

Borough bucking trend as jobless figures keep rising

DUDLEY and the Black Country is bucking the trend in the face of latest grim unemployment figures, which have revealed a record number of people out of work.

Jobless queues fell slightly in the borough.

They were down by 95 in Dudley last month and numbers also fell in the neighbouring areas of Sandwell, Wolverhampton and Walsall.

It comes as new figures reveal the country's total of people who are out of work has increased by 128,000 to 2.64 million – a 17-year high.

Across the West Midlands as a whole, unemployment has risen by 4,000 to 243,000.

The regional unemployment rate is now

9.2 per cent, compared to a national average of 8.3 per cent.

Nationwide, the jobless total is now worse than at any time since 1994.

A series of grim figures delivered an additional pre-Christmas blow to the Government, with youth and female unemployment showing big rises and the number of people claiming jobseeker's allowance increasing for the ninth month in a row.

Unemployment among 16 to 24-year-olds increased by 54,000 to 1.03m, the highest since records began in 1992.

The Office for National Statistics also reported that women's unemployment has increased by 45,000 and now stands at 1.1m.

Two take retirement



Sue Homer and Angela Newton with pupils at The Kingswinford School

TWO teachers who have chalked up decades between them are preparing to bid a fond farewell to pupils and colleagues as they retire.

Sue Homer and Angela Newton are leaving The Kingswinford School. Mrs Homer, aged 60, has taught PE at the school since 1972 and has also organised a range of extra-curricular sports and activities, including the netball and hockey teams.

She said some of her fondest memories were of the cruises and skiing trips she enjoyed with staff and students. After retiring she hopes to spend more time with her family and is looking forward to having more opportunities to navigate her barge on the waterways.

Her friend, Mrs Newton, 55, has been a member of the English department since 1991 and head of year 10 for five years.

She said one of the highlights of her time at the school was leading the production of Pirates of Penzance in the early 1990s. She also ran two school magazines, as well as organising a series of residential trips to Ingestre Hall in Stafford.

Safari park offering seasonal job sports

AROUND 250 seasonal jobs are up for grabs at West Midlands Safari Park in Bewdley.

Hundreds of hopefuls were expected to apply for the positions on offer as the recruitment drive got under way last week.

Jobs on offer include catering and shop assistants, games supervisors, amusement ride operators as well as positions working in the animal reserves.

A further 250 jobs will also be available in July when the park increases its seasonal staff for the peak season. Michelle Gale, the park's human resources manager, said the roles offered flexible hours.

She added: "We will be gathering job applications between Christmas and the New Year break, ready to start the interviewing process in January 2012."

The park will fully open for its new season on February 11. Visit www.wmsp.co.uk/jobs

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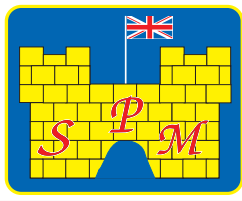
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Ambitious plan to link town centre to the canal

AN AMBITIOUS scheme to link Stourport town centre with the area's historic canal basins will help boost visitor numbers says the leader of Wyre Forest District Council.

The local authority bought the former Lloyds Garage site on Bridge Street with the help of the Homes and Communities Agency.

District bosses want to create a pedestrian gateway to the canal basins linking the popular Riverside Meadows area across Bridge Street through to the historic canal basins area, which has won heritage awards.

These have been won since British Waterways carried out a series of improvements to the area funded by the Heritage Lottery.

There will also be a number of retail and residential units built as part of the development which council chiefs hope will add to the appeal of the market town.

Eleven developers had been vying to take on the project but council chiefs have now announced that a local partnership of Clive Fletcher Developments in conjunction with construction company Thomas Vale will develop the site.

Leader of Wyre Forest District Council, Councillor John Campion, said: "The council and its partners have been working closely for some time now to bring forward this boost to the local Stourport economy that will increase its attraction as a visitor destination by making use of one of its heritage assets, the canal basins."

"At present few visitors get to experience the basins area as it is cut off from the main town, this development opportunity will open up pedestrian access to the historic core as well as attracting some new businesses to the town and providing some new homes."

"I'm particularly pleased that the local developer partnership will also see more local employment being used during the construction which is another benefit."

Best with books



The winning team of Kirsty Fraser, Rhona Fraser, Emelia Reynolds, Jessica Hill, all aged 10, Aaron Byrne, nine, Elle Pope, nine, and Emma Kindon, 10

YOUNG bookworms at a Stourbridge school are celebrating after becoming quiz champions. Pupils from The Ridge Primary School, Wollaston, took part in the Dudley Book Quiz, organised by the borough's school library service.

They had to swot up on half a dozen books including Great Expectations and Starlight Barking for the competition. Students were then asked individual and team questions about the novels and their authors.

The winning team, made up of pupils from Years five and six, were awarded a shield in honour of their victory and each member was given a medal.

Headteacher Deb Hudson said: "The children have been practising for a few weeks and had been learning all about the books and their authors."

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thechronicle

Pools to reopen in the New Year after repairs

TWO pools at a popular leisure centre in Stourbridge which have been shut since last month while repair works are carried out are set to reopen in January say council chiefs.

The leisure pool, which features a wave machine and is used by families, and the 25-metre pool at Crystal Leisure Centre, shut on November 21 while the repairs, which total £474,000, are carried out.

Both are due to reopen early in the new year once the work to replace the air handling units is carried out.

Councillor David Stanley, cabinet member for environment and culture, said: "Work is progressing well at Crystal Leisure Centre and on schedule to be completed in January next year."

"The old air handling units have been removed and the new ones are now being constructed on site."

"We apologise to people for the pools being out of action during this essential work, but the rest of the centre is open as normal," he added.

Bosses say the new units will replace the original ones that have been in place since the centre opened in 1990 and will reduce running costs.

Routine maintenance and repairs will also be undertaken during the closure of the centre.

Bosses say they have carried out the work in November and December as it is the quietest time of the year and likely to cause the least disruption.

Smaller fire trucks plan

Firefighters are to use smaller response vehicles rather than traditional fire engines to deal with minor blazes in the West Midlands.

The trial is being launched in Dudley, Tipton and Coventry where specially-adapted vehicles such as 4x4 cars equipped with blue lights will be sent out instead.

They will have a crew of three firefighters and will attend smaller blazes such as bin and rubbish fires between 10am and 10pm. If successful the scheme could be rolled out across other areas of the region.

West Midlands Fire Service says the move will help to save money and ensure the larger appliances are available to attend to more serious call outs. It said there were no plans to reduce the

number of fire engines at the stations but the trial is aiming to ensure the most appropriate vehicle for the job is used.

It follows a trial in Birmingham city centre where a Range Rover has been used to attend when automatic fire alarms have been triggered. The alarms may have been activated by dust or cooking fumes so a fire engine is not always needed.

Automatic

Elsewhere in the region, firefighters are only sent out to automatic fire alarms if they have a call to confirm there is actually a fire.

The fire service, which is battling to save up to £30m by 2014 due to cuts in Government funding, will begin the new pilot project early next year. It is currently carrying out a review to

determine the type of vehicles that will be used for the trial.

West Midlands Fire Service spokeswoman Lindsey Preece said: "Analysis of incident data from the last three years tells us that in many cases, a traditional fire engine isn't needed to respond to an incident."

Earlier this year, we began trialling the use of a specialist Range Rover to respond to false alarm calls in city centres across the West Midlands.

Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service, which covers the Wyre Forest area, is also looking at plans to reduce the number of firefighters sent out to automatic fire alarms. Under the new plans, they would carry out an assessment first, to see if they are needed to go to the scene.

Fire control room operators would ask a series of questions to establish if there is a fire.

Bingo for charities



Landlord Rob Hallard with regulars at the Rising Sun pub in Lombard Street, Stourport, where members of its bingo night have raised £1,000 for local causes

IT WAS a full house at a Wyre Forest pub as customers gathered to present £500 to each of two good causes in the area.

Regulars at the Rising Sun, Lombard Street, Stourport, raised the cash through raffles held at their weekly bingo nights.

All of the cash raised through the months goes into a bank account and is donated to charities at the end of the year. A total of £1,000 has been raised in 2011.

It will be split between Kidderminster Hospital's Millbrook cancer unit and the Elizabeth Mills Day Centre in Stourport.

Representatives from the hospital and day centre visited the pub to be presented with the funds.

People who play bingo at the pub each week bring a small prize for the raffle.

Licencee Rob Hallard said: "There are a lot of hard-working people who organise these raffle events during the year. We are absolutely delighted this sum has been raised."

Council is planning to freeze tax rates

ORGANISERS of a bumper sporting event that has raised more than £30,000 since the year 2000 are appealing for more football teams and auction items to boost their latest effort.

The annual football knockout event, organised by members of Kingswinford Snooker Centre, will take place at Sixes Indoor Football Centre in Ham Lane, Kingswinford, on December 27 at 10.30am.

After the soccer knockout, the event will move to the snooker centre in Stallings Lane, Kingswinford, for an auction of donated prizes, including sporting memorabilia, followed by video horse racing.

Organiser Jason Asbury says cash raised is donated to many causes.

He is appealing to teams wishing to take part or people with auction items to call 01384 277200 or email j.asbury@blueyonder.co.uk

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Shoppers watch the pennies

PURSE-STRINGS are being stretched to their limits in the run up to Christmas this year – with job losses, pay freezes and inflated prices combining to create the perfect storm for worried shoppers.

Shoppers at the Merry Hill shopping centre like many throughout the Black Country and the wider West Midlands said the tough times had made them think again about how much they can afford to spend over the festive period.

Mother-of-two Kay Parker says she has been unemployed for a while and had to plan in advance for Christmas this year to ensure she kept to budget.

"We started buying presents much earlier this year in September to try and spread the cost and make sure we didn't have large outgoings all at once," said Mrs Parker, 36, of Oak Park Road, Stourbridge.

"Normally we would have left it later but the

recent sales in the last few weeks have been a bonus."

Grandfather-of-seven Mel Gibson, aged 59, says Christmas is tough with a large family, especially added with the costs of food.

"We have had to cutback now question," said Mr Gibson, of Tipton.

"Food shopping is one of the main expenses so we have looked for items which are on offer and stores which have in some case 50 to 80 per cent off to get presents."

Spending

Ashley Newton has set himself a budget of around £150 for this Christmas to make sure he was not spending more than he could afford and enable him to keep a watch on all his financial outgoings.

"I've spent less than normal and I've looked where you can get good deals," said the 23-year-

old from Stoney Lane, Kidderminster.

Long-serving West Bromwich Albion kitman Dave Matthews, 66, was tackling the shops with wife Carol, 68, after receiving the all-clear from with battle against cancer.

And the father-of-two from Hasbury, Halesowen, said that his greatest Christmas present has been recovering from non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. However, he also said that they were watching the pennies.

But he added: "We have had to cut down on the amount of people that we have brought presents for because you just can't afford to do same as you used to."

Retired parcel firm manager Albert Golding, 64, of the Withymoor estate, in Brierley Hill, said: "It has not been too bad."

"Things have been expensive for a while so we've not had to spend any more than normal," he added.

Rock houses enjoying one of it best years ever

AN HISTORIC tourist attraction near Stourbridge is reporting a record year with more than 12,600 visitors in just eight months.

Volunteers at Kinver's rock houses say the last season was the best ever for the attraction, which is run by the National Trust.

Final figures released last week show that a total of 12,618 people visited the site this year. And the combined income for the houses and the cafe on the summit of Holy Austin Rock stands at £28,878 – which is an all-time high.

Preparations are under way for next season, which begins in March, with volunteers hoping to build on this year's success. Plans have been made to increase the opening

hours at the rock houses, giving people more time to visit the site.

The site will be open from 2pm to 4pm on Thursdays and Fridays and 11am to 4pm at weekends.

A recruitment drive has been launched by the trust to attract up to 100 more volunteers to help run the site.

Room stewards at the rock houses will work on a shift system.

Custodian for the rock houses Mike Parker said the move is designed to boost visitor numbers even further over the coming months.

Anyone interested in volunteering can contact the National Trust's community engagement officer Laura Broadhurst on 01562 712823.

Appeal for blood



Nick and Joanne Weston from Stourbridge with their five-year-old son Huw

A BOY who fought back from a series of life-threatening illnesses is being used as the face of a campaign to boost depleted blood banks and give life to others like him this Christmas.

The NHS says, when Christmas decorations go up, blood stocks go down – with 15,000 fewer donor appointments nationally in December last year, compared to the average per month.

Huw Weston, from Stourbridge, had "countless" blood transfusions during the first 10 months of his life after he weighed just 2lb 2oz at birth.

His mother Joanne Weston, of Apley Road, Wollaston, is a development manager at Dudley Community Partnership. She said: "If people didn't give blood, Huw wouldn't be alive today," she said.

When he was born 14 weeks early at Russells Hall Hospital, Dudley, with a collapsed lung, heart problems, a stomach condition and no immune system the doctors feared he would not survive the first 24 hours.

He spent most of the first two years of his life in hospital and needed heart surgery when he was only two months old – but, in September, he was well enough to start school at Amblecote Primary.

Mrs Weston, aged 39, who is now a blood donor herself, said: "I'd never really thought before Huw was born that he might need blood and I think most people don't realise how important it is to give blood."

"We are so grateful to the people who gave him the gift of life by donating their blood."

More details on giving blood is available by phone on 0300 123 2323 or visit www.blood.co.uk.

Thieves target cars on owners' drives in village

THIEVES have struck in a spate of cars crimes in a Midlands village. Four cases of vehicles being targeted in Blake-down, Kidderminster have been reported to police. The thefts happened on drives in Belbroughton Road between Wednesday evening and Thursday morning of last week.

Tools worth £2,000, including a £400 chainsaw and a £450 Bosch electric drill, were stolen from a Fiat Scudo van, while £40 cash, a Tom Tom satnav worth £120, and a pair of prescription sunglasses worth £470 were taken from a Volkswagen Golf on another drive. A rucksack and £5 cash were stolen from a Volkswagen Passat on a third drive, and there was also an attempt to get into a Ford Mondeo parked outside another house. Crime reduction advisor for Worcestershire, Peter Aston, said cars should be parked in a garage where possible, and that it was essential to ensure windows were closed, doors locked, and any alarms set.

Witnesses are asked to contact Pc Adrian James on 0300 333 3000 or Crimestoppers on 0800 555111.

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Singing celebration



Soloist Jasmine Fernandez, aged nine, and teacher Clare Deans with Merry Hill choir contest winners, St Mary's RC Primary School in Brierley Hill

YOUNGSTERS from four schools across the West Midlands are celebrating after winning top titles in an annual Christmas choir competition.

A total of 42 schools across the region took part in this year's Merry Hill Christmas choir competition and winners have now been announced in four categories.

Picking up the title of best choir was Wodensfield Primary School in Wolverhampton, best performance went to St James CofE Primary School, Oldbury, the best newcomer award went to St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School, Brierley Hill, and the judges award was given to Westacre Middle School, Droitwich.

Each school walked away with £1,000 prize money to mark their efforts. Youngsters were presented with certificates to mark their achievements at a special ceremony held at the Brierley Hill Centre and took to the stage for one final time to entertain shoppers. Pupils from St Mary's RC School performed songs including Do you Hear What I hear, Oh Holy Night and Winter Wonderland last Thursday.

thechronicle

Paying cash for scrap is facing ban in New Year

SCRAP dealers face being banned from paying for metal in cash from next year in new legislation aimed at cutting the crimewave of thefts which has hit the Midlands.

New laws would force dealers to pay for metal through card transactions, bank transfers and other traceable payments.

Dudley South MP Chris Kelly and Stourbridge MP Margot James met Home Office minister Lord Henley this week to discuss tightening up the rules.

Mr Kelly chairs the All Party Parliamentary Combating Metal Theft group.

He said: "The Government is now looking for the legislation which will include a cashless system of making payments for scrap metal."

"The outcome of the meeting is that in the New Year we fully expect a cashless system to be introduced. We were very pleased with how the meeting went."

"People have been going to scrap metal dealers and using false names like Mickey Mouse to avoid being

traced. It is a crime that is having an impact across society and the measures introduced need to address the whole chain handling scrap metal."

Mr Kelly said legislation could go through in a year.

Drain covers, shopping trolleys and lead stripped from church roofs have been among metal stolen by brazen thieves.

Railway

Mr Kelly said the thieves were putting the public and themselves at risk by stealing metal from railway lines.

"We are dreading the day a train has been derailed or involved in a huge accident as a result of metal being taken," he said.

Vital tax revenue for the treasury was being lost through untraced cash payments during the economic downturn, added the MP.

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CLUB NEWS

Christmas charity at meeting

SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL W'TON

WOLVERHAMPTON club members gathered for their Christmas meeting recently. As keen supporters of The Haven, the Women and Children's Refuge in Wolverhampton, members are encouraged to bring along gifts for the children and their mothers who the Haven is supporting. This year was no exception and a great number of presents were brought along.

A member of the Haven staff, Grace Lee attended the meeting to collect the items and thanked members very warmly for their generosity. As well as gift for the Haven, members brought along tinned goods, socks and blankets for passing on to the Little Brothers of the Good Shepherd.

The Good Shepherd Ministry in Wolverhampton provides food on a daily basis for those who are hungry.

The Little Brothers also has a drop-in centre providing for the needs of any disadvantaged or lonely people looking for support.

In addition, the Ministry distributes around 1,500 Christmas hampers each year for families in need in Wolverhampton and the surrounding areas.

The evening included some popular entertainment - ukulele playing and singing by Matthew Richards.

President Julia brought the evening to a close by wishing everyone a merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

Party pledge for hospital donation



A group of Sedgley Evening Guild's arts and crafts section wrapped in the blankets knitted for the Addis Ababa Hospital

THE arts and crafts group is continuing knitting blankets to donate to the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital, along with producing other craft items, and members had a very successful open day recently.

The guild also had a very good Christmas party with delicious food supplied by all the members.

SEDGLEY EVENING GUILD

The walking group is still enjoying its walks around the local countryside, especially during the recent good autumn weather.

The next meeting will be in January when the group meets on the third Monday at 7.15pm at Sedgley Community Centre.

Festive fare for members

DUDLEY SOUTH LADIES LUNCHEON CLUB

THE Christmas meeting was held at the Kingfisher Hotel, Wall Heath, when chairman Jean Corns welcomed 45 members and three visitors.

Ben the young new, chef and the friendly efficient staff were thanked for the excellent food and service received over the year, and everyone received a gift of a box of chocolates.

Speaker Keith Cheetham talked about the life of

Charles Dickens and read passages from several of his books.

The group is now looking forward to 2012 and the new programme being arranged by Pauline Handley.

On January 13, the speaker will be Ian Nex of

Birmingham Botanical Gardens.

The annual general meeting will be held on February 10, and on March 9, John Clews from the RSPB will give a talk.

Following the success of the visit to Cheltenham in November, arrangements are in hand for another coach outing in the spring.

For more details on the club, call the secretary on 01902 372984.

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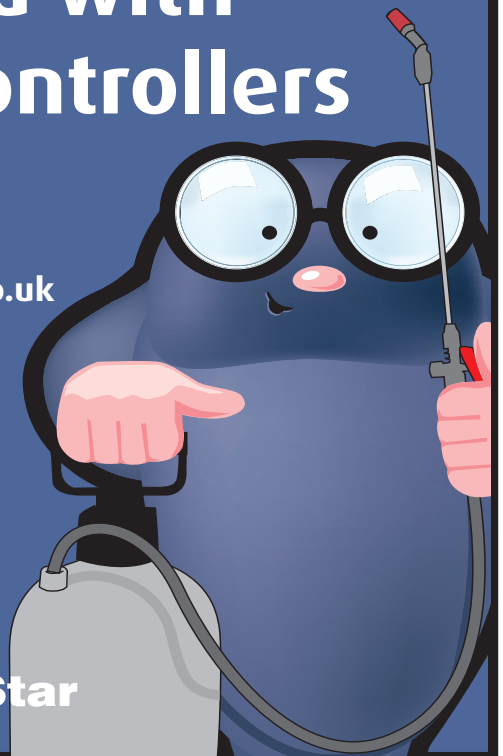


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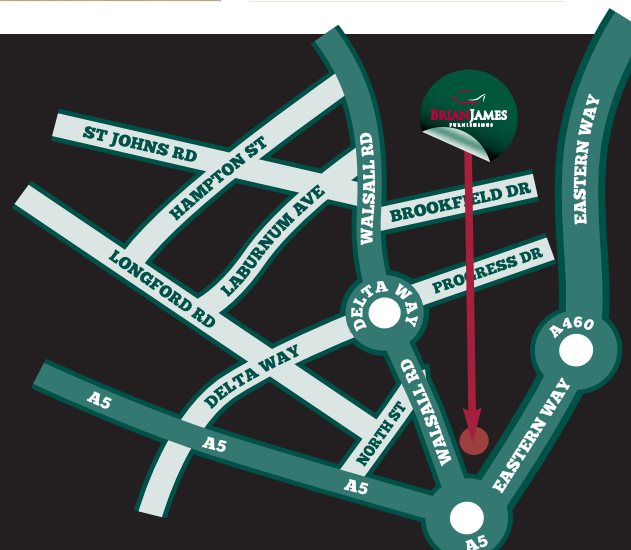
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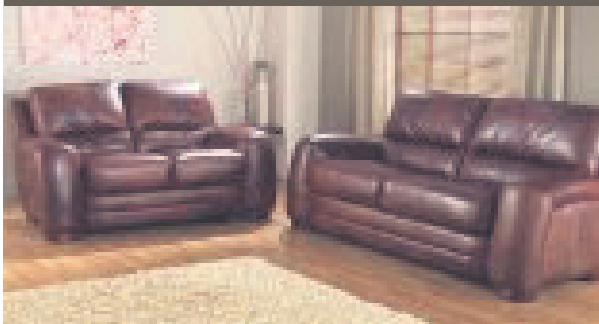
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6.00 Breakfast. **9.00** The Nativity. (R) **10.00** Saturday Kitchen Live. **11.15** Nigel Slater's Simple Christmas. (R) **12.15** BBC News: Regional News; Weather. **12.30** Keeping Up Appearances. (R) **1.30** Film: The Santa Clause 2. (2002) Disney comedy adventure sequel, starring Tim Allen. **3.05** Film: G-Force. (2009) Premiere. Children's adventure, starring Bill Nighy. **4.30** BBC News: Regional News; Weather. **4.50** Winter Wipeout Christmas Special. **5.50** Film: The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe. (2005) Fantasy adventure, starring Tilda Swinton.

8.00 Merlin. Part two of two. Camelot has fallen to Morgana, leaving Arthur a broken man, and Merlin realises only an extraordinary act will restore his master's faith. Last in the series.

8.45 EastEnders. Masood and Zainab try to stop Yusuf's plan.

9.20 Outnumbered. The Brockmans plan to escape the festivities to spend Christmas in the sun – but Grandad ends up in hospital. Karen gets toothache and Ben develops a fascination with knives.

10.00 Lapland. Festive comedy drama, starring Sue Johnston.

11.15 The National Lottery Saturday Night Draws.

11.25 BBC News; Weather.

11.45 Midnight Mass from St George's Cathedral Southwark. Led by Archbishop Peter Smith; National Lottery Update.

12.55 Film: At First Sight. (1999) Romantic drama, starring Val Kilmer and Mira Sorvino. **2.55** Weatherview. **3.00** BBC News.

6.00 CBeebies. **7.00** CBBC. **8.50** Film: Jump In! (2007) Drama, starring Corbin Bleu. **10.10** Film: Bicentennial Man. (1999) Sci-fi drama, with Robin Williams. **12.10** Film: Homeward Bound II: Lost in San Francisco. (1996) Animal adventure sequel, with the voice of Michael J Fox. **1.35** Pappano's Essential Tosca. **2.35** Tosca from the Royal Opera House. **4.45** Christmas University Challenge. **5.15** Dad's Army. (R) **5.45** Carols from King's.

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7.00 The John Craven Years. Documentary charting the TV presenter's career, which has spanned 40 years. Featuring interviews with Jon Culshaw, Noel Edmonds and Martin Bell.

8.00 Morecambe and Wise. Memorable moments from the comedy duo's Christmas shows. (R)

9.00 The Many Faces of Les Dawson. Profile of the Manchester-born comedian.

10.00 The Best of Les Dawson. Tribute to the comedian. (R)

10.25 Top of the Pops 2: Christmas Special. (R)

11.55 Blackadder Rides Again. (R)

12.55 Never Mind the Buzzcocks. (R) **1.25** Film: Holiday in Handcuffs. (2007) Romantic comedy, starring Melissa Joan Hart and Mario Lopez. **2.50** Close.

6.00 CITV: Mini CITV. **7.25** CITV. **8.15** Film: Tom and Jerry: The Magic Ring. (2002) Premiere. Animated comedy, with the voice of Jeff Bennett. **9.25** Film: Santa Claus: The Movie. (1985) Family fantasy adventure, with Dudley Moore. **11.30** Coronation Street. **1.25** ITV News; Weather. **1.45** Film: The Polar Express. (2004) Animated adventure, with the voice of Tom Hanks. **3.35** Film: ET: The Extra-Terrestrial. (1982) Sci-fi fantasy, with Henry Thomas. **5.45** ITV News; Weather.

6.00 You've Been Framed! Christmas Special. Festive foul-ups. (R)

6.30 The Cube Celebrity Special. With Coronation Street stars Ryan Thomas and Julie Hesmondhalgh.

7.30 Text Santa. Part two of two. The charity initiative concludes.

10.00 Piers Morgan's Life Stories: Donny Osmond. The singer talks about his life and career.

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11.00 ITV News; Weather. **11.15** Carols from Bucklebury.

12.15 Film: Connie and Carla. (2004) Two women flee after witnessing a murder and plan to lie low by posing as drag queens on the Los Angeles gay scene. Comedy, starring Toni Collette and Nia Vardalos; ITV News Headlines. **2.10** Film: Spartacus. (1960) Roman epic, with Kirk Douglas. **5.20** ITV Nightscreen.

7.15 Film: Garfield. (2004) Family comedy, with the voice of Bill Murray. **8.45** Olive, the Other Reindeer. (R) **9.40** Prep & Landing. (R) **10.10** Film: Charlotte's Web. (2006) Family drama, with the voice of Julia Roberts. **12.00** Film: The Muppet Christmas Carol. (1992) Comedy, with Michael Caine and Steven Mackintosh alongside the puppet characters. **1.40** Gordon's Christmas Cookalong – Get Ready. (R) **1.50** Jamie's Christmas with Bells On. (R) **2.55** Jamie's Christmas with Bells On. (R) **4.00** Deal or No Deal: Deal Panto. **5.00** Come Dine with Me Extra Portions. (R) **5.30** Come Dine with Me Extra Portions. (R)

6.00 Come Dine with Me Extra Portions. (R)

6.30 Come Dine with Me Extra Portions. (R)

7.00 Channel 4 News. **7.05** 4thought.tv.

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7.15 FILM: Hairspray. (2007)

9.20 Home for the Holidays. **10.55** Bill Bailey: Dandelion Mind.

11.55 Father Ted Christmas Special. (R)

1.05 Music on 4: Inputoutput. (R) **1.15** Comedy Lab: Kabadassas. **1.45** Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows – T4 Movie Special. (R) **2.00** Cee Lo Takes the UK: Christmas with All the Goodies. (R) **2.10** Film: Ashes of Time Redux. (1994) Wong Kar-Wai's drama, starring Leslie Cheung. **3.45** Southland. **4.30** World War II: The Last Heroes. (R) **5.25** Brothers & Sisters. (R)

6.00 Milkshake! **10.15** Chef Donald. (R) **10.20** ThunderCats. **10.55** Meerkat Manor. (R) **11.25** Ice Road Truckers: Deadliest Roads. (R) **12.25** Charley Boorman's Extreme Frontiers. (R) **1.30** Cars Toons. **1.35** Film: Mrs Miracle. (2009) **3.25** Film: Meet the Santas. (2005) Fantasy comedy sequel, with Steve Gutterberg. **5.05** Film: Scrooge – A Christmas Carol. (1951) Charles Dickens' fantasy, starring Alastair Sim.

7.00 Eddie Stobart's Christmas Delivery. Festive edition of the documentary series, in which the company's truckers battle winter conditions to ensure shops and councils receive their supply of Christmas trees and salt.

7.55 5 News Weekend.

8.00 The Gadget Show Christmas Eve Special. Suzi Perry investigates 4G communications, Jason Bradbury examines products due to hit the shops in 2012, and Jon Bentley views an advanced helmet designed for fighter-jet pilots.

9.00 Greatest Christmas TV Moments. Countdown of 50 Christmas TV crackers, featuring Gavin & Stacey, Morecambe and Wise, Only Fools and Horses, Wallace and Gromit, Doctor Who, Top of the Pops and The Royle Family.

12.00 SuperCasino. **4.00** Great Artists. (R) **4.25** Divine Designs. (R) **4.50** Rough Guide to Beaches. **5.00** Hana's Helpline. (R) **5.10** The Milkshake! Show. (R) **5.35** Thomas & Friends. (R) **5.45** Roary the Racing Car. (R)

ITV2
3.15 Aladdin. **4.45** Jack and the Beanstalk. **6.15** Film: The Scorpion King (2002) **8.00** Film: Nanny McPhee (2005) **10.00** Celebrity Juice: Christmas Special **11.00** Film: The Bourne Identity (2002)

ITV3
2.35 A Christmas Carol **4.05** Christmas Lights **5.30** The Darling Buds of May **6.45** Agatha Christie's Poirot **9.00** Agatha Christie's Marple **11.00** Film: Santa Claus: The Movie (1985)

ITV4
4.00 Film: The 'Burbs (1989) **6.00** Film: Dragnet (1987) **8.10** Film: Jaws: The Revenge (1987) **10.00** Film: Demolition Man (1993)

BBC THREE
7.00 Great Movie Mistakes 2011: Not in 3D **8.00** Top Gear **9.20** Film: Son of Rambow (2008) **10.50** EastEnders **11.20** Family Guy

BBC FOUR
7.00 Timeshift: The Golden Age of Trams – A Streetcar Named Desire. A history of trams in Britain, exploring why they became popular in cities and towns at the start of the 20th century – and discovering why some areas have reintroduced them. **8.00** The Pharaoh Who Conquered the Sea **9.00** Film: Land of the Pharaohs (1955) **10.40** Timeshift: Epic – A Cast of Thousands! **11.40** The Doris Day Special

E4
3.35 Sorority Girls **4.40** Desperate Housewives **5.40** Scrubs **6.35** The Big Bang Theory **8.00** How I Met Your Mother **8.30** The Big Bang Theory **9.00** The World's Greatest Prankster **11.05** Film: Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan (2006)

FILM4
3.25 The Thirty-Nine Steps (1959) **5.15** My Neighbour Totoro (1988) **7.00** The Spiderwick Chronicles (2008) **9.00** Star Trek (2009) **11.20** Bronson (2008)

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6.00 Breakfast. **9.00** The Nativity. (R) **10.00** Christmas Day. (R) **11.00** Songs of Praise. (R) **12.25** BBC News: Weather. **12.35** Film: Kung Fu Panda. (2008) Animated comedy, with the voice of Jack Black. **2.00** Top of the Pops Christmas 2011. **3.00** The Queen. (2009) Premiere. Animated sci-fi comedy, with the voice of Reese Witherspoon. **4.35** BBC News: Weather. **4.50** Film: Ratatouille. (2007) Premiere. Pixar animated comedy, with the voice of Patton Oswalt.

6.30 The Gruffalo's Child. **7.00** Doctor Who. The Time Lord helps a wartime widow and her children realise their dreams.

8.00 Strictly Come Dancing Christmas Special 2011. With Barry McGuigan, P. Pollard, Simon Webbe, Debra Stephenson and Charlie Brooks.

9.00 EastEnders. Hour-long episode. Masood sets out to bring Kamil home, but Yusuf has one more trick to play. Shirley is shocked to discover the identity of Phil's stalker.

10.00 Absolutely Fabulous. **10.30** Michael McIntyre's Christmas Comedy Roadshow.

11.30 BBC News: Weather. **11.45** On Christmas Night. **11.50** Have I Got a Bit More News for You. (R)

12.30 The Graham Norton Show Christmas Special. (R) **1.35** Film: The Hot Chick. (2002) Body-swap comedy, starring Rob Schneider. **2.10** Weatherview. **3.15** BBC News.

6.00 CBeebies. **7.10** CBBC. **9.35** Film: The Magic Roundabout. (2005) Animated adventure, with the voice of Ian McKellen. **10.50** Film: The Sword in the Stone. (1963) Disney animated adventure, with the voice of Ricky Sorenson. **12.10** Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. (R) **2.10** A Musical Nativity with John Rutter. **3.10** The Prince and the Composer.



(R) **4.40** Dad's Army. (R) **5.10** Porridge. (R) **5.50** The Queen. Her Majesty's annual address to the nation and the Commonwealth. (R)

6.00 Christmas University Challenge. The first semi-final of the festive quiz.

6.30 Darcy Bussell Dances Hollywood. The former Royal Ballet star celebrates classic dance musicals.

8.00 Blackadder the Third. The new prime minister plots to bankrupt the Prince Regent. (R)

8.30 Blackadder the Third. Edmund falls foul of Dr Johnson. (R)

9.00 The Toys That Made Christmas. A look back at playthings of the past.

10.30 James May's Man Lab Xmas Special. (R)

11.30 Victoria Wood with All the Trimmings. (R)

12.25 The Many Faces of Les Dawson. (R) **1.25** QI. (R) **1.55** Film: Beyond a Reasonable Doubt. (1956) **3.15** Close.

6.00 CITV: Mini CITV. **7.25** CITV. **7.45** Film: The Borrowers. (1997) Children's fantasy, starring John Goodman. **9.25** Film: March of the Penguins. (2005) Oscar-winning nature documentary, narrated by Morgan Freeman. **11.00** Film: Miracle on 34th Street. (1994) Christmas family drama remake, with Richard Attenborough. **1.05** ITV News: Weather. **1.15** Film: Aladdin. (1992) Disney animated adventure, with the voice of Robin Williams. **3.00** The Queen. **3.10** Film: Happy Feet. (2006) Animated adventure, with the voice of Elijah Wood. **5.10** ITV News: Weather. **5.30** New You've Been Framed!

6.00 Emmerdale. Hour-long episode. Amy makes a decision about Kyle's future.

7.00 All Star Family Fortunes Christmas Special.

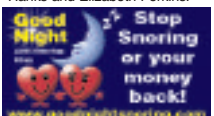
8.00 Coronation Street. **9.00** Downton Abbey. Violet has concerns about Rosamund's new suitor (guest star Nigel Havers).

11.05 ITV News: Weather. **11.20** Benidorm. (R)



12.35 The Comedy Annual. Comedians talk about the key moments of 2011. (R) **1.35** Film: The Towering Inferno. (1974) Disaster movie, starring Paul Newman and Steve McQueen. **ITV News Headlines**. **4.20** Kojak. (R) **5.15** ITV Newsnight. **5.55** ITV Morning News.

6.10 Film: The Ugly Duckling and Me. (2006) Premiere. Animated comedy, with the voice of Morgan C Jones. **7.40** The Simpsons. (R) **8.00** The Simpsons. (R) **8.30** Film: James and the Giant Peach. (1996) Children's fantasy, with Paul Terry. **10.00** Gordon's Christmas Cookalong Live. **2.00** Ice Age: A Mammoth Christmas. **2.30** The Snowman. (R) **3.00** Celebrity Come Dine with Me. (R) **4.05** Channel 4 News. **4.10** 4thought.tv. **4.15** The Alternative Christmas Message. **4.20** Deal or No Deal: Deal Party. **5.20** Film: Big. (1988) A boy is magically transported into the body of a 30-year-old man and applies his childlike brain to the problems of adult life. Comedy, starring Tom Hanks and Elizabeth Perkins.



7.15 FILM: Ice Age: Dawn of the Dinosaurs. (2009) Animated adventure sequel, with the voice of John Leguizamo.

9.00 Alan Carr: Chatty Man Christmas Special. With Ruth Jones, David Williams, Jedward and Steps.

10.00 Rude Tube: Epic Christmas. Alex Zane presents the 50 greatest festive internet videos.

11.05 So This Is Christmas.

12.05 8 Out of 10 Cats Christmas Special. **1.05** American Football Live. **4.45** Brief Encounters of the Sporting Mind: Rally Driving. (R) **5.00** Post Modern Pastimes. (R) **5.50** Road to London 2012: That Paralympic Show. (R) **5.25** Scrapheap Challenge. (R)

6.00 Milkshake!: Peppa Pig. **6.05** Fifi and the Flowerlots. (R) **6.15** Fireman Sam Christmas Special. (R) **6.35** Castle Farm. **6.45** Igam Ogam. (R) **6.55** Roobarb and Custard Too. (R) **7.00** The Milkshake! Show. **7.25** Make Way for Noddy. (R) **7.35** Bert and Ernie's Great Adventures. (R) **7.45** Little Princess. (R) **8.05** Angelina Ballerina. **8.25** Rupert Bear. (R) **8.45** Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom. (R) **9.00** Film: Mist: The Tale of a Sheepdog Puppy. (2006) Live-action animal adventure, featuring the voice of Mel Giedroyc. **10.30** Trailer Horn. **10.35** Animal Rescue Squad. (R) **10.55** Andre Rieu's Christmas Spectacular. **11.55** Ice Road Truckers. (R) **12.55** Ice Road Truckers. (R) **1.55** Cars - Unidentified Flying Mater. **2.00** Film: Mrs Miracle 2: Miracle in Manhattan. (2010) Family drama sequel, starring Doris Roberts. **3.45** Film: Mrs Santa Claus. (1996) Period musical, starring Angela Lansbury. **5.30** Film: The Santa Suit. (2010) Premiere. Comedy, starring Kevin Sorbo and Jodie Dowdall.

7.25 FILM: The Christmas Card. (2006) Romantic drama, starring John Newton and Alice Evans.

9.05 Eddie Stobart's Christmas Delivery. Festive edition of the documentary series. (R)

10.00 Britain's Favourite Christmas Songs. Festive music countdown.

1.00 SuperCasino. **3.55** Meals in Moments. (R) **4.05** Nick's Quest. (R) **4.30** Divine Designs. (R) **5.00** Hana's Helpline. (R) **5.10** The Milkshake! Show. (R) **5.35** Thomas & Friends. (R) **5.45** Roary the Racing Car. (R)

ITV2
3.00 The Xtra Factor: Louis's Best and Worst
4.00 The Xtra Factor: Tulisa's Best and Worst
5.00 The Xtra Factor: Kelly's Best and Worst
6.00 The Xtra Factor: Gary's Best and Worst
7.00 Film: Jack Frost (1998) **9.00** Film: The Bourne Supremacy (2004) **11.05** Celebrity Juice: Christmas Special

ITV3
3.20 Film: Carry On Cowboy (1966) **5.20** Film: Carry On Cleo (1964) **7.10** Film: Carry On Camping (1969) **9.00** Film: Carry On Up the Jungle (1970) **10.55** Film: Carry On Jack (1963)

ITV4
2.25 Film: Night Passage (1957) **4.15** Film: Spartacus (1960) **8.00** Film: The Magnificent Seven Ride! (1972) **10.00** Film: Rocky (1976) Oscar-winning boxing drama, starring Sylvester Stallone.

BBC THREE
7.00 Great Movie Mistakes 2011: Not in 3D
8.00 Film: Armageddon (1998) **10.40** Russell Howard's Good News Extra **11.05** EastEnders

BBC FOUR
7.00 Film: El Cid (1961) **9.50** The Johnny Cash TV Show: Country Gold **10.50** Top of the Pops 1976: Christmas Day Special **11.40** Top of the Pops 1976 Christmas Special

E4
2.45 Film: Jingle All the Way (1996) **4.30** Film: Annie (1982) **7.00** The Big Bang Theory **7.55** Film: Independence Day (1996) **10.40** The Big Bang Theory **11.40** Tool Academy

FILM4
3.20 Miracle on 34th Street (1947) **5.10** Ponyo (2008) **7.15** The Ladykillers (1955). A criminal and his gang meet their match when an elderly landlady unknowingly thwarts their attempts to kill her. Ealing comedy, with Alec Guinness. **9.00** Juno (2007). Comedy, starring Ellen Page. **10.50** Watchmen (2009) Comic-book drama, starring Patrick Wilson.

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		Thunder Cats	10.35
Meerkat Manor, (R) 11.05	Meerkat Manor, (R)		
11.35	Ice Road Truckers, (R) 12.35	5 News	
Lunchtime. 12.45	Film: The Producers, (2005)		
Musical comedy, starring Matthew Broderick. 3.10			
Film: Seven Brides for Seven Brothers, (1954)			
Musical Western, starring Howard Keel. 5.10	Film: The Wizard of Oz, (1939)	Musical fantasy, starring	
Judy Garland, 7.05	Britain's Favourite Christmas		
Carols, (1981)			
Romantic drama, with Patrick Swayze. 12.05	Film: Fragile, (2005) 2.00	SuperCasino. 4.00	Meals in
Moments, (R) 4.10	Grey's Anatomy. 4.55	County	
Secrets, (R) 5.10	House Doctor, (R)		

Channel 4 6.40 *Sall Mali*, (P) 6.45 *The Treacle People*, (R) 6.55 *The Hoobs*, (R) 7.20 *Famous Fred*, (R) 7.50 *Little Wolf's Book of Badness*, (R) 8.15 *Perfect Cuddles*, 8.40 *Everybody Loves Raymond*, (R) 9.10 *Mr. Bean*, (R) 9.40 *Mr. Bean*, (R) 10.10 *Frasier*, (R) 10.40 *The Big Bang Theory*, 11.05 *The Big Bang Theory*, 11.30 *The Simpsons*, (R) 12.00 *The Simpsons*, (R) 12.30 *Film: Five Children and It*, (2004) 2.15 *Film: Penelope*, 2.45 *5.15pm*, 3.00 *Christmas*, 3.30 *Christmas*, 3.50 *Celebrity Come Dine with Me Extra Portions*, (R) 6.00 *The Simpsons*, (R) 6.30 *Hollyoaks*, 7.00 *Channel 4 News*, 7.25 *4thought*, 7.30 *Come Dine with Me: Celebrity Christmas Special*, 8.00 *Big Fat Gypsy Christmas*, 8.30 *Big Fat Gypsy Christmas*, 9.00 *Car: Chatty Man Christmas Special*, (R) 12.10 *Comedy Land: Mr & Mrs Hotty Hot Hot Show*, 12.40 *Random Acts*, 12.45 *UK & Ireland Poking Tour*, 1.40 *Extreme Sailing Series*, 2.05 *Sailing*, 2.30 *Boxing*, 2.55 *Boxing*, 3.20 *Boxing*, 3.45 *KOTV Boxing Weekly*, 4.25 *World War II: The Last Heroes*, (R) 5.20 *Brothers & Sisters*, (R) 5.45 *Brothers & Sisters*, (R) 6.00 *Brothers & Sisters*, (R) 6.15 *Brothers & Sisters*, (R) 6.30 *Brothers & Sisters*, (R) 6.45 *Brothers & Sisters*, (R) 6.55 *Brothers & Sisters*, (R) 7.00 *Brothers & Sisters*, (R) 7.15 *Brothers & Sisters*, (R) 7.30 *Brothers & Sisters*, (R) 7.45 *Brothers & Sisters*, (R) 8.00 *Brothers & Sisters*, (R) 8.15 *Brothers & Sisters*, (R) 8.30 *Brothers & Sisters*, (R) 8.45 *Brothers & Sisters*, (R) 9.00 *Brothers & Sisters*, (R) 9.15 *Brothers & Sisters*, (R) 9.30 *Brothers & Sisters*, (R) 9.45 *Brothers & Sisters*, (R) 10.00 *Brothers & Sisters*, (R) 10.15 *Brothers & Sisters*, (R) 10.30 *Brothers & Sisters*, (R) 10.45 *Brothers & Sisters*, (R) 11.00 *Brothers & Sisters*, (R) 11.15 *Brothers & Sisters*, (R) 11.30 *Brothers & Sisters*, (R) 11.45 *Brothers & Sisters*, (R) 12.00 *Brothers & Sisters*, (R) 12.15 *Brothers & Sisters*, (R) 12.30 *Brothers & 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10TV 6.00 CITV: Supernatural. (R) 6.20
SpongeBob SquarePants. (R) 6.30
Horrid Henry. (R) 6.35 Almost Naked Animals.
6.50 Almost Naked Animals. 7.05 Fleabag
Monkeyface. 7.20 Fleabag Monkeyface. 7.35 Film:
K-9. (1989) 9.25 Countrywize at Christmas. (R)
10.00 The Real St. Trinian's Train Ride
(1966). 10.10 Star Family Portrait. (R) 1.05
News. 1.20 News. 1.25 Regional News. 1.50
1.50 Grease: After They Were Famous. (R) 2.35
Midsummer Murders. (R) 4.30 Lewis. (R) 6.30
Regional News. 6.45 Film: ITV News
7.00 7.00 Emmet. (R) 7.25 Countrywize
Kitchen: New Year Festive Feasts. 8.00 Ad of the
Year. 9.00 I'll Be Alright on the Night. 10.00 ITV
News at Ten. 10.00 Regional News.
10.10 News. 10.15 Bend Sinister. (R) 11.20 The Jonathan
Ross Show. (R) 12.30 The Zone. ITV News
1.00 1.00 The Village. (R) 1.00
(1995) 4.10 Film Night: Screen 5.55 Film Morning
News.

TV1 **6.00** CITY: Monk. **6.05** SpongeBob SquarePants. (**R**) **6.15** Horrid Henry. (**R**) **6.30** Almost Naked Animals. **6.45** Almost Naked Animals. **6.55** Fleabag Monkeyface. **7.10** The Wombles. **7.15** The Wombles. **7.25** Winner. **7.40** Film: New York Minute. (2004) **9.25** Countrywise Kitchen: Stocking the Winter Larder. (**R**) **9.55** All Star Family Fortunes. (**R**) **10.55** Film: The Railway Children. (1970) **1.00** ITV News: Weather. **6.45** ITV News: Weather. **7.00** Chitty Chitty Bang Bang: After the Show. Famous. (**R**) **2.30** Agatha Christie's Marple. (**R**) **4.30** Inspector Morse. (**R**) **6.30** Regional News: Weather. **6.45** ITV News: Weather. **7.00** Coronation Street. **7.15** ITV News: Review of the Year. **8.00** Emmerdale. **8.30** Coronation Street. **9.00** Paddy's 2011 Show and Telly. **10.00** ITV News at Ten; Weather. **10.10** Regional News: Weather. **10.15** Film: Notting Hill. (1999) **10.30** ITV News Headlines. **5.55** ITV Morning News. **6.00** ITV News. **6.05** ITV News. **6.15** ITV News. **6.25** ITV News. **6.35** ITV News. **6.45** ITV News. **6.55** ITV News. **7.05** ITV News. **7.15** ITV News. **7.25** ITV News. **7.35** ITV News. **7.45** ITV News. **7.55** ITV News. **8.05** ITV News. **8.15** ITV News. **8.25** ITV News. **8.35** ITV News. **8.45** ITV News. **8.55** ITV News. **9.05** ITV News. **9.15** ITV News. **9.25** ITV News. **9.35** ITV News. **9.45** ITV News. **9.55** ITV News. **10.05** ITV News. **10.15** ITV News. **10.25** ITV News. **10.35** ITV News. **10.45** ITV News. **10.55** ITV News. **11.05** ITV News. **11.15** ITV News. **11.25** ITV News. **11.35** ITV News. **11.45** ITV News. **11.55** ITV News. **12.05** ITV News. **12.15** ITV News. **12.25** ITV News. **12.35** ITV News. **12.45** ITV News. **12.55** ITV News. **1.05** ITV News. **1.15** ITV News. **1.25** ITV News. **1.35** ITV News. **1.45** ITV News. 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Channel 4 Hoobs. (R) 7.10 *Wildie Stries*. (R) 7.40 *Perfect Couples*. 8.05 *Everybody Loves Raymond*. (R) 8.35 *Everybody Loves Raymond*. (R) 9.05 *Frasier*. (R) 9.35 *Seinfeld*. 10.05 *The Simpsons*. 10.35 *The Big Bang Theory*. 11.05 *The Simpsons*. (R) 11.35 *The Simpsons*. (R) 12.05 *Film: See Spot Run*. (2001) Canine comedy, starring David Duchovny, Michael Vartan, and Michael Vartan. 4.00 *Come Dine with Me*. 5.30 *Christmas Coach Trip*. 5.30 *Celebrity Come Dine with Me*. 6.30 *Hollyoaks*. 7.00 *Channel 4 News*. 7.25 *4thought*. 7.30 *Come Dine with Me: Celebrity Christmas*. Special. 8.00 *Living with the Amish*. 8.30 *Christmas Carol*. 9.00 *2009 Christmas Special*. 9.30 *2009 Christmas Special*. 10.00 *2009 Christmas Special*. 10.30 *2009 Christmas Special*. 11.00 *Comic Presents: The Hunt for Tony Blair*. (R) 12.15 *Random Acts*. 12.20 *Film: The Godfather: Part II*. (1974) 5.30 *Brave New World* with Stephen Rea. 5.30 *Brave New World* with Stephen Rea. (R) 5.40 *The Treacle People*. (R) 5.55 *30*.

Channel 5 ThunderCats. **10.35** Zoo Days. **(R)** **10.50** World's Strongest Man 2011. **(R)** **11.50** 5 News Lunchtime. **11.55** Ice Road Truckers. **(R)** **12.55** Film: Back to the Secret Garden. (2000) **2.55** Film: David Copperfield. (2000) Charles **6.20** The Witches of Oz: 5 News Update. **8.00** World's Strongest Man 2011: 5 News at 9. **9.00** The Mentalist. **10.00** It's All About Amy. **11.00** The Truth About Cheryl Cole. **(R)** **12.00** SuperSas. **3.55** Meals in Moments. **(R)** **4.05** Wildlife SOS. **(R)**

Couples: 7.35 Everybody Loves Raymond
9.05 The King of Queens
Frasier: 9.05 **Frasier:** 8.01
The Big Bang Theory: 10.05 **The Big Bang Theory:** 10.35
The Simpsons: 11.10 **The Simpsons:** 11.40
Film: 11.40
Comedy: 1.00
Silverstone: 1.40 **Film:** CutThroat Island. (1995)
Swashbuckling adventure, starring Gene Davis,
David Caruso, and Mel Gibson.
Trip: 2.30 **Celebrity Wine Time** With Me Extra
Portions. 6.00 **The Simpsons:** 6.30
Hollywood Channel: 7.25 **72nd Annual V.E.**
7.30 **Cosmo Wine** With Me
Comedy: 8.00 **Bear's Wild Wednesdays** With
Comedy: 9.00 **Comedy Showcase:** The Angels Net
Epiphany Show. 9.30 **Lee Evans: Access All**
Areas
The World of Lee Evans: 11.05 **The World of Lee Evans:** 11.40
The World of Lee Evans: 12.10 **Random Acts.** 12.15 **Film:**
The Godfather: Part III. (1990) 3.15 **Steve Jobs:**
3.45
The World of Lee Evans: 10.10 **Brave New World**
With Stephen Hawking. (N)

Channel 5 ThunderCats. 10.35 Animal Rescue Squad. (R) 10.50 Meerkat Manor. (R) 11.20 World's Strongest Man 2011. (R) 12.25 5 News Lunchtime. 12.35 Ice Road Truckers. (R) 1.30 Film: Showdown at Abilene. (1956) 3.15 Film: Alice in Wonderland. (1999) 5.45 Film: Snow White. (2001) 7.30 Fifth Gear; 5 News Update. 8.00 World's Strongest Man 2011; 5 News Update. 9.00 Most Shocking Celebrity Moments of 2011. 12.00 SuperCasino. 4.05 Motorsport Mundial. 4.30 Fifth Gear. (R) 4.55 County Secrets. (R) 5.10 House Doctor. (R)

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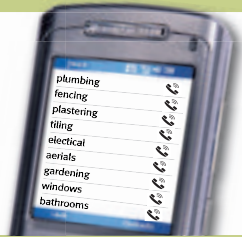
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Tividale rue their missed chances

TIVIDALE were left to rue a succession of missed opportunities – including a missed penalty – as they lost 3-2 in the Midland Alliance at Gresley.

Four goals came in the space of 14 minutes either side of half-time. First the home side took the lead on 32 minutes when Oliver made a good run down the right before supplying Marc Goodfellow.

The lead lasted just four minutes as Russell's dash down the left ended with a cross that was headed past Gutteridge by Jukes.

Then on the stroke of half-time James Jepson found Goodfellow on the left and his low cross was put away by Rob Spencer.

Tividale were level a minute into the second half when a half-clearance from Gutteridge was knocked back into the area to Russell by Adam Hill and he made no mistake with his finish.

Then on 66 minutes came the winner. A long punt from Gutteridge down the middle was laid back from Turville to Goodfellow for a wonderful curling strike from 25 yards into the top corner.

Goodfellow almost completed his hat-trick but his goalbound effort late on was parried for a corner.

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Only two of the club's junior sides saw their games beat the frost.

The under-14s were beaten 3-1 at Ettingshall.

Hawks fell behind in the first half to a scrambled goal but the second period saw good pressure from Halas and an equaliser through Michael Eaton.

They were hit on the break to go 2-1 down before conceding a killer third.

McDermott enjoying life investing in youth

By Craig Birch

DARREN McDermott marked a year that changed his life by opening his own amateur boxing club – but it wasn't until he saw Gerald McClellan on television that he appreciated his luck.

The former Midlands and English middleweight champion, who also challenged for the British and Commonwealth titles, saw his career come to a sad end in September last year.

McDermott was in training for a shot at the British super-middleweight title against Paul Smith when a stray blow to the head from Nathan Cleverly, now a WBO world champion, left him in dan-

ger. Brain surgery saved his life but ended his career at 32, leaving a huge void that could only be filled by staying in the sport.

Today, the 33-year-old is content again after opening his own amateur boxing club, Brooklands ABC, named after his house and run from his home gym in the back garden in Woodseton, Sedgley.

His first five fighters have been cleared and carded and the club already has ABA status, with McDermott regaining the amateur trainer's licence he had from his days at Priory Park ABC.

On Saturday, the "Black Country Bodysnatcher" threw open his

doors to welcome friends and family of his fighters, so it's just as well there's a barbeque and pub in the back garden too. That said, the amateurs of Brooklands ABC had better not get used to it – parents are banned from the gym!

McDermott may not be boxing any more but he is still in control of his faculties, able to work for a living and get about as he chooses, leaving him grateful for big mercies. He said a recent TV documentary about Gerald McClellan made him realise just how lucky he was.

He said: "Somebody phoned me straight after the programme and said 'someone was looking after you, Darren, when that happened to you'."

"The things that he was doing in the ring that night, that was exactly how I felt. Like when he was touching his eye as if it was bleeding. When I had bleeding onto my brain, it popped something in my eye. It felt as if there was blood running down the front of my eyeball."

"I kept touching it and looking in the mirror and there was nothing there, but it looked as if my eye was bleeding. To see him now and

this is me, I have just got to thank my lucky stars."

Now the amateurs of Brooklands ABC represent McDermott's future in boxing. There's no way he won't look after his fighters – after all, the jewel in the crown is his younger brother, Jason.

Cradley's Jacob White and Wednesfield's Dean Taylor, both 16, will be in the ABA Juniors while Sedgley's Jack Griffiths, also 16, and Wolverhampton's Ethan Collins, 14, are works in progress.

McDermott said: "I am getting a buzz from watching these kids. I was looked after, like I think all kids should be."

All square after a late Robins strike

DUDLEY TOWN'S rehabilitation as one of the West Midlands Premier League's leading clubs continued with a solid 1-1 draw at third-placed AFC Wulfrunians.

Things might have been even better for The Robins had it not been for a strike by Tom Piggott, son of Town's record goalscorer Gary, just five minutes from time.

After a fortnight's gap since their last league fixture, boss Andy Burgess was forced to tinker with the side that had beaten Wednesfield 2-1 at The Cottage Ground.

Richard Langford's suspension saw Adam Cross brought in while Barry Richards earned a start.

Dudley were quick off the mark and had the ball in the net in the fourth minute when Nikki Faux rounded Danny Tipton.

But the former Black Country Rangers man was denied his first league goal since August when he was adjudged to have been offside from Danny Ludlow's pass.

Wulfs' best chance of the half came on 10 minutes when a rare slip from Jay Trevelan saw the Robins' shot-stopper almost spill a Nathan Rose-Laing shot into his net.

As the half drew on the visitors looked more likely to take the lead and almost did so in a goalmouth scramble when Cross smashed a header against the crossbar.

Faux and Dreniz Bala proved constant threats to the hosts' backline but neither could quite make the breakthrough to give Dudley the half-time lead they deserved. Wulfrunians drew

By Steven Box

themselves back into the game in the second period but like Dudley in the first, could not take advantage of their chances, although Aaron Brown went close with a swirling shot that cleared Trevalen's bar just past the hour mark.

Just as the game looked to be heading towards a goalless stalemate, Dudley struck. A fine free-kick from Ludlow was picked up by the impressive Rob Whitley, who made no mistake in glancing the ball past Tipton for his first league goal in Town colours.

This prodded the hosts into life although Dudley could have doubled their lead with 10 minutes to go when Anthony Cox's fierce shot was parried away by former Hedgesford Town keeper Tipton.

Dudley were dragged back level with just five minutes remaining. It appeared a goalmouth scramble to have been cleared only for Piggott to send a powerful shot straight into the top corner.

Awesome cup success for under-10s



The lads of Stourbridge under-10s celebrating getting into the semi-finals of the Prima Tiger Cup at Leicester

LEAD coach Richard Walker praised Stourbridge under-10s for an "awesome achievement" after victory over West Norfolk in rugby's Prima Tiger Cup quarter-finals at Welford Road.

Stourbridge Walker booked a semi-final return to the home of Leicester Tigers in January with a hard-fought 3-1 win over their opponents from Kings

Lynn in Norfolk on Saturday. The players, coaches and supporters then watched the Tigers' 23-19 win over French giants Clermont Auvergne in Europe's Heineken Cup.

"It's an awesome achievement from a great group of lads," said Walker.

"To play at Welford Road, the boys were really excited. They had an

opportunity to follow in the footsteps of great players and they enjoyed the occasion massively."

Stourbridge will be joined in the semis by Derbyshire side Melbourne, Bury St Edmunds, and cup holders Oakham.

They will be played at Welford Road on the weekend of January 21.

No treats for Yeltz in trip to seaside

HALESOWEN failed to build on an early lead and fell to a disappointing 3-2 Evo-Stik South Division One defeat after Chas Hemmings struck a hat-trick for lowly Clevedon.

The afternoon started brightly for the visitors when Nathaniel Caines swung over a left-wing cross and Justin Nisbett was left free to head Halesowen into a fifth-minute lead.

Clevedon had produced little until Hemmings bundled home an equaliser from George Brimson's cross in the 18th minute.

As Halesowen's early promise evaporated, Clevedon created the clearer chances. The Seasiders took the lead three minutes before the interval when Hemmings unleashed a screaming 25-yard drive.

At the start of the second half Halesowen had to replace the injured Evans and his replacement Simon Flower was kept busy.

Hemmings completed his hat-trick in the 74th minute by heading home Brimson's corner.

Yeltz substitute Naveed Arshad curled in a loose ball with six minutes left but it was not enough.

Comeback success for Wasps

WORDSLEY WASPS Under-9s West came from behind to beat Forest Falcons West with a brilliant 4-2 win.

Captain Skye Sykes pulledwd one back after Wasps had fallen 2-0 behind and Kai Del Kiffin levelled in the second half.

Shane Walker beat two defenders before firing Wordsley in front and Dan Street sealed the victory with a fourth.

The club's two under-11 sides did battle at Wordsley park and it was the West team who defeated the East 1-0. Lewis Kendrick smashed home the only goal.

The under-15s North have transformed their struggling start to the season to go unbeaten in four Division three games after they beat Pensnett Panthers.

Jack Simmer got Wordsley's first and Michael Goulding claimed the winner.

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Hurrell stars in Stour's victory

THE curse of the former player struck as a storming display from giant Stourbridge Rugby Club lock forward Robbie Hurrell led them to their first league win over Coventry.

Hurrell dominated the lineup and put in an excellent shift around the field, as the Saxons built on a slender half-time advantage with a convincing post-interval display to run out 20-12 winners.

The Saxons outscored the visitors by three tries to two, to claim a third win in four games, and four vital points that boost their hopes of avoiding the drop.

Coventry controlled the early stages through their powerful scrummage but the hosts' defensive organisation was more than a match for everything thrown at them.

Stourbridge turned defence into attack on the half-hour mark, with a superbly constructed try.

Hurrell burst clear from a lineout, before secure handling allowed Matt Williams to put top scorer Nathan Bressington in the corner for his tenth touchdown of the campaign.

Stourbridge director of rugby, Neil Mitchell, introduced two fresh props at half-time.

This paid immediate dividends, as hooker Liam Wordley emerged from the bottom a driving maul with his eighth try of the season.

Coventry needed a speedy response, and they got it when centre Jack Green stepped 30 metres through a static home defence to touch down a try, which Mark O'Connor upgraded.

The hosts extended their advantage 15 minutes from time through replacement flanker James Rodley.

A determined Coventry once again hit back through Lewis Barker but it was not enough.

Glover fight is upgraded

TIPTON'S Lee Glover has seen his contest with former Prizefighter rival Ian Bailey upgraded to a title fight.

Glover was due to face Bailey in a six-round bout on Tuesday at the Holiday Inn in Birmingham.

But now the 'Tipton Slasher' will take on Bailey in a 10-round fight at Walsall Town Hall on February 25.

Heathens to start with a Staffordshire clash

By Tim Hamblin

DUDLEY HEATHENS have confirmed the prestigious British Under-21 final will be staged at their adopted Wolverhampton home on Tuesday, April 24.

And the club have also agreed to launch the 2012 season with a Staffordshire Cup clash against neighbours Stoke.

Chairman Nigel Pearson said: "Stoke are assembling another superb side following their successful 2011 season and in Ritchie Worrall, Ash Birks and Jaime Pickard they have a powerful spearhead.

"I must admit I was interested in bringing Pickard to our club last season and obvi-

ously we have the Chris Van Straaten connection as he owns his contract with Wolverhampton.

"But the numbers game really ruled out Jaime coming to us this season but he was tremendous in 2011 for Stoke and I wish him all the best.

"I'm sure we will be in for two superb meetings to open the season and both will be a good test for the respective teams.

"Naturally we would love to win our home meeting and it would be lovely to win

over two legs against a top team like Stoke. We will announce the dates once they are agreed, but every time we take the Heathens to Loomer Road it reminds me of our season there in 1996 when we had Greg Hancock and Billy Hamill spearheading the team.

"The promoters at the time deserve great credit for keeping the Heathens going after the loss of Dudley Wood Stadium, but ultimately the mathematics didn't add up.

"We're delighted to be staging the British Under-21 Final and I would urge all our fans to put Tuesday, April 24 in their diary.

Season tickets won't be valid, though, as this is a British Speedway Promoters' Association shared event."

And on the subject of season tickets, Pearson says sales are up on this time last year. "We had some orders over the weekend which took us past the equivalent stage last season which is a terrific achievement," he said. "I think it underlines the fact that the fans like the look of the team and also believe it's good value for money.

"There will be a marginal increase in ticket prices after December 31 but we feel it's great value for our supporters."

Hackett's side have win and a defeat

THE GLASSBOYS completed an Evo-stik League Southern Premier Division double over Cirencester but they were made to work hard for their 2-1 win.

In the second minute, Aaron Drake rolled a free-kick to Sean Geddes whose 20-yard drive was saved by Town keeper Kevin Sawyer.

A minute later at the other end, a right-wing flag-kick from James Mortimer-Jones was fumbled by Lewis Solly before the ball was scrambled to safety.

The home side threatened again when Linden Dovey played the ball forward to John Griffin but his volley dropped wide.

Stourbridge had a let-off when Mitchell Bryant got in behind the home defence and rolled a shot past Solly and wide of the far post.

The Glassboys opened the scoring in the 22nd minute. A long kick forward from Solly caught out the Cirencester defence and Ryan Rowe clinically finished from close range.

The second half was only two minutes old when Ben Reardon levelled for Cirencester with a shot that dipped beyond the reach of Solly.

The home side had to dig deep and, although their play lacked the fluency of the first period, they did have chances.

With 10 minutes left Stourbridge grabbed the winner.

Griffin capitalised on a slip by Jamie Dunn to gain possession and he calmly rounded Sawyer before slotting the ball home.

But the Glassboys followed up this win with a 2-0 loss at Hitchin on Monday.

Easy street despite key player injuries

A Dudley Kingswinford side missing several key players still managed to record a comfortable 37-22 victory at Broadstreet.

The players brought in to cover all played well and the result was never really in doubt. Broadstreet are having a difficult season but they are always tough opposition on their own ground and DK did well to keep focused throughout the game.

They should perhaps have scored at least two more tries and certainly conceded one too many, but injured player coaches Pete Knight and Jon Higgins would have settled for this result at the start.

It was interesting to note that 14 of the DK starting XV all developed through the club's excellent Mini Junior setup.

Besides Knight and Higgins, DK were also without last week's Man of the match Al Francis who was rested but Rich Kelley, James Parkes and Dan Shakespeare were excellent in the DK front row. Dan was on top of his opposite number throughout and all three were prominent in the loose.

Not to be outdone skipper Ollie Shakespeare had arguably his best game of the season with lots of hard yards completed.

The back row was clinical too, with No 8 Tom Bissell having one of his best games to date with several fine breaks, blockbusting tackles and astute kicking from hand.

In the backs the half backs moved the ball well with Stefan Shillingford, until injured after half-time, and Tom Weaver creating constant problems for the overworked Broadstreet defence.

The DK Supporters Man of the Match however was unanimously Duncan Chance.

The super quick right winger scored a hat trick of tries and might have had two or three more had he received better service.

Duncan has been a big plus for DK this season and

By Mark Dobson

is a real menace to any defence with his raw pace.

Finally a word for debutant left wing Dave Platts, son of former 1st XV star Brian, who had a sound game and scored a fine first senior try.

Adam Greaves made an impressive DK debut from the bench in the second half replacing Ian Langford.

Superb

Fly half Scott Harman was wide with a 2nd minute penalty for Broadstreet but DK had looked sharp from the off and went ahead after seven minutes with a well worked try.

Quick ball through the backs to Duncan Chance saw the winger cruise in at pace for DK's first try.

Simon Fletcher added superb conversion from touch to make the score 0-7.

Against the run of play, Broadstreet reduced the arrears after 32 minutes in their first concerted attack of the game.

Several strong forward drives took them up to the DK 10m line and the ball was swept out to No. 8 Chris Zitic who shrugged off a couple of tackles to score a try.

DK replied almost immediately with a forceful

attack and following a ruck the ball was swiftly moved to debutant wing Dave Platts who had come off his left wing to join the attack on the right and scored a smart opportunistic try.

Simon Fletcher added another fine conversion from touch for DK to lead 5-17.

After a further bout of heavy forward pressure, Ian Langford forced his way over at the corner on 40 minutes to make it 5-22.

Pete Bicknell scored a try early in the second half for Broadstreet, converted by Scott Harman, but DK's response was immediate with a second try for Duncan Chance that secured a bonus point.

Simon Fletcher scored a fourth try for DK after 56 minutes to make it 15-32 following a superb 40m break from the mercurial Jordan Brookes.

Duncan Chance secured a hat trick of tries after 67 minutes, upping the DK lead to 15-37.

DK conceded an unnecessary penalty try at the end of the game when a Broadstreet player was held back illegally but it did not matter in the final result.

McDermott is back in the ring



Retired Dudley boxer Darren McDermott is back in the sport after opening his own amateur club to develop young fighters in the area. Full story - Page 35

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From left to right:
Edward, Matt, John and Thomas Shotton

Following on from the success of their Stock Clearance Event in November, the directors of Cousins are continuing their strategy of buying-up much of their suppliers' surplus stock, allowing them to offer unprecedented low sale prices, with massive savings of up to 70% right across their fantastic range of brand name furniture, carpets, beds and homewares.

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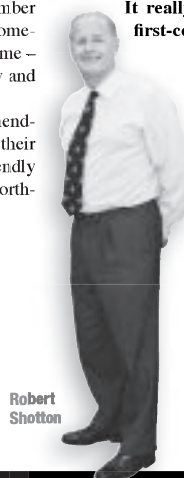
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Robert Shotton



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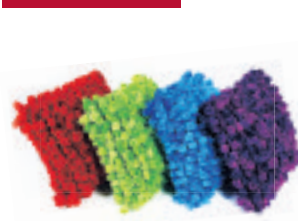
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